He Loves Me Not (He Loves Me)

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He Loves Me Not (He Loves Me)

by Gazinguponstars

Summary

"Finn."

The agony fades slightly, and he manages to look up.

Robin is crouching beside him, worry warping his flawless features. Concern is painted into the night sky that are his eyes, and before Finney can be stunned that Robin is right here, wet hands cup his face gently.

‘’What hurts?’’ Robin asks, and Finney has to bite back a choked sob.

‘’Everything.’’ He replies, eyelids drooping.

He’s so tired, the shock over Robin talking to him, and touching him, is lost.

‘’Okay,’’ Robin says quietly. ‘’Okay.’’

Or, Finney and Robin haven't spoken in three years, after Robin completely cut off contact. That all changes when Robin walks in on Finney slumped against the school bathroom wall, bloody and broken.

Notes

Hiii!! Welcome to this mess of a fic lol, I apologise for any mistakes, I haven't had a chance to edit properly yet. I'm super excited for this idea, so hopefully it reads okay :))
This isn't going to be super long, I'm thinking between 3-10 chapters, which admittedly is a rather large jump, but honestly I haven't planned this at all, so we'll see.
I'm sorry for making Robin the way he is, I promise there's a reason! If you look closely at the tags you might find a clue haha. I know he's a bit ooc, but oh well. They might all be a bit ooc, I'm definitely calming Vance down for this fic, so sorry if you like super unhinged and violent Vance.

Please be sure to mind the tags, there are going to be instances/mentions of child abuse, alcohol, violence, possibly suicidal thoughts, etc... so click off if that's not something you think you can deal with. I'll put trigger warnings for each chapter, and please let me know in the comments if I miss anything!!
I think that's everything, so happy reading everyone!!

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1

Finney sits on the school bathroom floor, within plain sight of anyone walking in, and contemplates life.

He's vaguely aware of the fact that his ribs might be cracked, or at least severely bruised. He can't really bring himself to care.

How many times has he sat here, in this very spot, in this exact situation? Too many to count, that's for sure.

The tingle of blood running down his lips is a feeling Finney is extremely familiar with, and he wonders if there will ever be a time it catches him by surprise. Today is definitely not that day.

He's never quite understood how the name 'Finney' offends people so greatly, but he supposes that's not really his problem.

Or, well, it is, considering he's the one that gets beat up for it.

Bullies never really need a concrete reason, though. They simply lock onto a target and boom, that's it; their victim's life is now officially hell for the foreseeable future.

Finney's musings are interrupted by the squeak of the bathroom door, and he looks up, praying it's not a teacher. The last thing he needs right now is an adult who thinks they know best.

His eyes connect with dark brown ones, and he decides that if someone hands him a gun, right here right now, he will actually pull the trigger.

Because Robin never-lost-a-fight-in-his-life Arellano, best friends with Pinball Vance Hopper and baseball prodigy Bruce Yamada, walks in and stops dead at the sight of Finney slumped against the back wall.

Oh, and did he forget to mention that he just so happens to be Finney's ex-best friend and long-time crush?

He half wishes the idiots who left him in this position come bursting back in to finish him off, because his bad fortune is getting ridiculous at this point. He will honestly take a teacher coming in and whisking him off to the nurse's office, if it means he won't have to sit here in agony while the love of his life uses the bathroom and stares at

him weirdly.

Robin seems to have shaken himself out of whatever haze he was in upon first seeing Finney, because he walks up to the taps, flipping on the cold water.

It's only then that Finney realises Robin has blood dripping from his knuckles, and he has to hide a wince at how painful the wounds look. Ironic really, seeing as his own face is probably ten times worse.

The silence is suffocating, and Finney can't imagine a place worse than here. Just his luck that of all the people to walk in, it's Robin Arellano.

It's stupid, really. They were inseparable for years, friends since they were little kids. Finney remembers the best part of his whole week was going over to the Arellano household on a Friday night, and Robin's uncle taking them to the drive-in.

Then everything crumbled down three years ago, and Finney still doesn't understand why. One day they were fine, and the next, they weren't. Robin just simply… stopped. Stopped talking to him, stopped texting him, hell, he even stopped *looking* at Finney.

And Finney being the type of person he is, didn't say anything. He didn't try to talk to Robin or ask what was wrong. They were inseparable, until all too soon, they weren't.

Yet, Finney has loved Robin since the age of six, and he doesn't think that will go away anytime soon. No matter how angry he is, Finney can't help but fall in love a little deeper every time he hears Robin laugh from across the room or feel a little prouder every time Robin beats up another person for insulting him.

Robin never does anything without reason, so despite the betrayal he feels, Finney will always believe Robin stopped being his friend for a good reason.

He has to believe it. Finney won't know what to do otherwise. Robin wouldn't just *leave.* There had to have been a reason. Right?

The sound of a phone ringing fills the room, and causes Finney to flinch, biting his bottom lip to stifle the whimper that movement brings.

It takes him a second to place the noise, and by then, Robin is

already answering the call, phone in the hand with the least amount of blood.

''Yeah?'' Robin sounds like smooth velvet, and Finney thinks in normal circumstances, the dizziness he currently feels would be because of Robin's gorgeous voice.

''I'm in the first-floor bathroom,'' A pause. ''Yeah, that was me.''

Finney desperately tries to make out what the other person is saying, but to no avail.

''It was Moose,'' Robin rolls his eyes, glancing at his knuckles. ''He's got some damn sharp teeth.''

Finney blinks, taking the information in slowly. By the time his concussion addled brain figures it out, Robin has ended the call and is cleaning his hands again.

''You fought Moose?''

Robin turns to look at Finney, and for a moment, he can't understand why – did he say something?

And wow, maybe he really should go to the nurse's office, or even the hospital, to check for brain damage.

Because it hits him all of a sudden, and about five beats too late, he shoves a hand over his mouth in horror.

Except that's a terrible idea, as the jolt of moving his arm sends a shock wave through his body, and he keels forward, a pained cry spilling between his fingers.

Genuine tears spring to his eyes, and Finney knows he's been joking about it, but he really is hurting. It feels like his ribs are on fire, and with the amount of red that's been pouring out of his nose, he won't be surprised if he faints from blood loss. Now that he thinks about it, he remembers his head being slammed into the tile wall at one point, which explains the dizziness and nausea.

''Finn.''

The agony fades slightly, and he manages to look up.

Robin is crouching beside him, worry warping his flawless features. Concern is painted into the night sky that are his eyes, and before

Finney can be stunned that Robin is *right here,* wet hands cup his face gently.

''What hurts?'' Robin asks, and Finney has to bite back a choked sob.

''Everything.'' He replies, eyelids drooping.

He's so tired, the shock over Robin talking to him, and touching him, is lost.

''Okay,'' Robin says quietly. ''Okay.''

Robin lets go of Finney's face, and he almost whines from the loss of contact.

Robin reaches for his phone and seems to type something quickly, looking satisfied at whatever the other person texts back. He drops his phone and leans to hold Finney's face again.

''Who did you text?'' Finney can't help but question, watching as Robin inspects his face carefully.

''Vance and Bruce. I told them to bring medical stuff.'' Robin says, brushing a loose curl away from Finney's eyes.

Finney has never been good at keeping his mouth shut, despite the usually horrible outcomes that are the consequence of it.

''Why?''

Robin stops examining his black and blue cheeks and focuses on him properly. Over the years, Finney has learned to read between the lines, and the regret twisted into the pull of Robin's lips confuses him.

''I'm sorry for ignoring you earlier.'' Robin says in lieu of an explanation.

''Why?'' Finney demands, determined to understand.

Robin swallows tightly. ''I didn't know if I was allowed to come near you.''

Finney can't even begin to decipher what that means, so he asks something else. ''Why'd you fight Moose?''

Robin shrugs. ''He was shit-talking.''

Finney blinks, staring at him. ‘’Did you hurt him?’’

Robin shakes his head. ‘’Nothing permanent.’’

Moose beat Finney up last year, for knocking him over in the hallway by accident. He can’t say he’s sad to find out that Moose picked a fight with Robin and lost.

Before he can say anything else, the bathroom door flies open.

Vance Hopper and Bruce Yamada walk in, and Finney can’t decide if that’s a good or bad thing. Vance and Bruce are the people Robin has replaced him with, and when he sees them together, he can’t help but compare. What do they have that Finney doesn’t?

Bruce smiles when he sees Robin, and Finney thinks it’s funny how fast it drops when Bruce catches sight of him.

He’s only spoken to Bruce on one occasion, and it was about two years ago, right at the start of Bruce’s climb to fame in the baseball world.

See, once upon a time, Finney played and loved the sport, too. And one fateful game, him and Bruce went head-to-head, Bruce coming out on top, obviously.

Afterwards though, when the players were shaking each other’s hands, Bruce had grinned at Finney, and told him his ‘arm was mint’.

Finney quit baseball soon after that game, but from then on, in Finney’s mind, Bruce is the kindest person he’s ever met.

So, in spite of the occasional jealousy he feels when he catches sight of Bruce joking around with Robin, all in all he doesn’t mind him. The angry blonde coming in behind Bruce, however, fills Finney with nothing but anxiety.

Vance Hopper is a loose cannonball, and Finney watches warily as the boy quite literally stomps in.

They’ve never talked, but you don’t have to speak to Vance to know him. Much like Robin, he’s known for fighting, and also being obsessed with the vintage pinball machine that sits in the old gas station. Vance has the high score, and everyone knows that if you mess with him while he’s playing, you must have a death wish.

Robin ends fights, and Vance starts them. That's the difference between the two.

Finney can't deny that he's always been curious as to what Robin sees in him, but if even Bruce Yamada, teachers pet and baseball genius, likes him, then Vance can't be all bad.

''What happened?'' Bruce looks alarmed, and he takes a seat next to Robin.

Vance hangs back, expression indifferent, although the tick in his brow tells Finney otherwise.

Robin takes a cotton pad and stands up, running it under cold water, before resuming his place on the ground and tilting Finney's face towards him.

''I got beat up.'' Finney says to Bruce.

The fingers holding his jaw tighten briefly, and the dabbing of the cotton pad on his temple pauses, before returning quickly.

''What'd you do to them? You look half dead.'' Bruce says, following Robin's lead and wiping around Finney's nose.

Finney closes his eyes. ''Nothing.''

Someone snaps loudly, and Finney reopens his eyes. Robin is glaring at him.

''Don't shut them. You need to stay awake.'' He says sternly.

Finney groans, but dutifully keeps them wide open.

''Who was it?'' A voice from the taps says, and Finney looks up at Vance.

''What?''

Vance comes closer, hovering just above Bruce.

''Who was it?'' He repeats.

Finney's head is pounding, and quite abruptly, he thinks about the possibility of this being a hallucination.

The thought isn't too far-fetched, and he wonders if he's actually

dying, and the hallucination is the universe giving him a kind send off before passing.

''You're not dying.''

Finney stares at Robin, processing the words.

''Oh.'' Finney says dumbly. He didn't mean to say all that out loud.

Robin nods towards Vance. ''Answer his question.''

Finney ignores both of them and glances to Bruce.

''Shouldn't you guys be in class?''

Bruce smiles sheepishly. ''Technically yes, but Robin's text was urgent, so we both ditched.''

''Sorry,'' Finney apologises, frowning. ''I don't mean to get you in trouble.''

''Finney, you're practically bleeding out. This is much more important than some stupid history class.'' Bruce reassures him.

''We need to check your ribs.'' Robin says, and Finney just looks at him.

Robin furrows his brow, seemingly waiting for something.

''He's asking for permission, dumbass.'' Vance huffs, gesturing to Finney's shirt.

''Oh. Go ahead.'' Finney dips his head, waiting.

Careful fingers slide under the bottom of the scarlet stained shirt, and Robin lifts it up slowly.

Finney watches Robin's facial expression cautiously. He hopes they're just bruised – he really doesn't want to have to go to the hospital. His dad will kill him.

Robin is suspiciously blank; eyes void of emotion.

An upset noise has Finney turning to Bruce, seeing as the other boy physically flinches at the sight of Finney's chest and stomach.

''Please don't tell me something's broken.'' Finney breaks the

uncomfortable silence, still not daring to have a look himself.

''I don't know yet.'' Robin replies, and Finney can't say he's filled with confidence by the answer.

''Did they hit you with a bat?'' Vance chimes in, staring at what Finney can only imagine is a map of black, blue, purple and red.

Finney thinks about it, biting his lip. Did they have a bat? He can't remember seeing one, but he believes there was about a five-minute gap where he was unconscious, so the idea is possible.

''They might have. I passed out at one point though, so they probably used it during then.'' Finney responds.

Vance looks troubled, of all things. Finney can't say Vance Hopper being worried for him is something he ever thought would happen.

Nobody speaks as they assess the injury, and sometimes Robin will press onto an area lightly, and Finney will hiss in discomfort. Everything hurts, and Finney thinks the chance of nothing being broken lessens as time goes on.

''You need proper help.'' Robin says finally, letting the shirt drop.

Finney groans. ''Are you sure?''

''It's really bad.'' Bruce says, looking sympathetic. Vance nods in agreement from above him.

Finney's heart fills with dread. He doesn't want to have to call his dad.

''Come on,'' Robin holds his arm. ''I'll help you up.''

With a combined effort from Bruce and Robin, he manages to stand up. His knees feel weak, and he puts a hand on the wall behind to steady himself. He's not sure how long he'll be able to stay stood before collapsing again.

''Thanks for trying, I guess.'' Finney says, wincing as his ribs give an agonizing pinch.

His backpack is crumpled on the floor, and he leans to pick it up, holding an arm over his stomach.

The shrill sound of the bell echoes around the room, and Finney

gestures to its general direction.

''You should probably go. Missing two classes in a row isn't good for your attendance.''

Vance snorts. ''*Attendance*.'' He mutters under his breath, rolling his eyes.

Bruce elbows Vance in the side, glaring at him.

''Finney's right, if you keep skipping class you'll get suspended again.'' He says, crossing his arms together.

Vance rolls his eyes again, but obediently walks to the door and pulls it open.

''Are you guys coming or what?'' He grumbles, not looking at all pleased.

Finney ducks out of the doorway and stops at the sight of kids running through the hallway. He forgot about the other people.

''Are you okay?'' Asks a soft voice by his ear, and he looks to find Robin stood right next to him.

The adrenaline he's been running on has dissipated, and now he's just exhausted. Sad, too.

He doesn't understand Robin at all. He wonders if he ever did; this new Robin is not what he knows.

''Fine.'' He snaps, sick of Robin's dumb act.

He almost regrets his tone when Robin's face falls, stepping back. But no, this isn't Finney's fault. Robin brought it upon himself – he doesn't deserve sympathy.

''Well,'' Finney begins, backing away. ''Thanks for the help. I appreciate it.'' He says, smiling awkwardly.

Bruce smiles at him, waving a little, while Vance just turns away. Robin stares at him, and there's a second when Finney thinks he's about to say something, but someone across the hallway yells, and the moment passes. Robin raises his hand in a half-hearted wave and turns to follow Vance.

Finney is disappointed, but not surprised. He expected nothing less,

and he hopes he won't have to speak to them again. He's curious, sure, and Robin is still the love of his life, but he doesn't think he can handle the drama confrontation will bring.

For now, he has to focus on getting to the nurse's office alive.

Should be an easy enough task, right?

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

He’s just trying to remember what exactly his first class is, when he hears a shout from across the street.
Robin, Bruce, and Vance are walking just ahead of him, on the other side of the road. Bruce is half on Vance’s back, seemly trying to reach for something that Vance is holding out of his reach. Robin is watching them, cheering Bruce on.
Finney doesn’t know what to do. Does he keep walking, and hope they don’t look behind them? Or does he hide, and wait till they’re out of sight?
Unfortunately, Finney’s terrible luck strikes again, because in the process of trying to throw Bruce off him, Vance twists and sees him standing there.

Chapter Notes

Hey!! Welcome to the second chapter, sorry this one's a little short, it's a bit of a filler before the story gets going properly.
Thanks so much for all the love on the first chapter, you guys are so kind <33
I am in fact English, so if there are any mistakes in the American terminology, please tell me and I'll correct it!
Triggers warnings for this chapter: There is talk of alcohol, and also an instance of child abuse. Nothing too violent, but Terrence does put his hands on Finney. There are mentions of suicidal thoughts/feelings towards the end of the chapter, as well as it being heavily implied that someone ended their own life.
I think that's everything, but please let me know if I missed one!!

Finney hates the hospital. Everything is too bright, and too loud. If he could choose, white would definitely not be the colour theme; people are suffering enough, they don’t want to be blinded while receiving treatment.

Unfortunately, Finney can’t change it, and until his dad hurries up and signs whatever forms he needs to, he’s stuck here.

As it turns out, one of his ribs did end up being cracked. He’s not too sure how he managed to get away with only one of them being broken, considering he doesn’t think there’s a single patch of skin on his torso the colour it’s supposed to be, but he’s not complaining.

It's now 10pm – Finney has been here since 2pm, and he thinks he'll start screaming if he stays any longer. The doctors have diagnosed him with a minor concussion and one broken rib, so thankfully they're letting him go home.

Or maybe not thankfully. Finney glances up to see his dad at the front desk, and cringes slightly. His dad didn't say anything when he arrived, but Finney knows him. He had to be called out of work for this, and if there's one thing his dad hates, it's his work being interrupted.

Another thing his dad hates, is Finney causing trouble. He couldn't just tell everyone he got beat up, so he told them he got into a fight – and lost, obviously. He'll be shocked if he doesn't have another broken rib by the end of the night.

After what feels like years, his dad gestures at him to hurry up, and Finney hops off the hospital bed, trailing behind him. There's utter silence while they walk to the car, and Finney jumps into the backseat. He's not taking any chances; the passenger seat is too dangerous right now.

Finney keeps his head down as his dad starts the car, pulling out of the car park. Despite what some people may think, the silent treatment is always worse. Finney would rather for his dad to yell at him this second; the quiet is unnerving.

Finney never gets what he wants though, and for the rest of the journey, no one speaks. The car pulls into their driveway, and Finney opens the door, watching his dad.

''Your sister is at Susie's tonight.'' Are the first words Finney hears from him, and he sighs in relief.

Knowing Gwen, she'd try and stick up for Finney if their dad tried anything. He doesn't want that.

A small part of Finney though, is terrified. If Gwen isn't here, then there's nothing to stop his dad from hurting him. There's no one to hear Finney crying, and there's no one to clean him up afterwards.

They've reached the kitchen now, and Finney stands uncomfortably in the doorway. His dad beelines for the fridge, taking out one of his beloved beers.

Finney glances longingly at the stairs. If only there was a lock on

his bedroom door, he could run and hide in there.

''So,'' His dad begins, taking a swig from the bottle. ''Who'd you fight?

Finney swallows tightly. ''No one important.''

His dad raises his eyebrows. ''No one important, huh?''

Finney shakes his head and prays to whatever god out there his dad will just let it go.

Of course, his prayers aren't answered, because seconds later a glass bottle smashes into the wall beside his head, and he jerks away, eyes wide.

''Seemed pretty damn important to me, considering I got called out of work for it!'' His dad yells, and Finney's ears ring from the sudden change in volume.

''I'm sorry.'' He says, staring at the floor.

''Sorry doesn't change the amount of money I just spent on those stupid hospital bills, does it?''

Finney stiffens – his dad is stood in front of him, and he doesn't dare look up.

''I'll pay you back.'' Finney mutters, fiddling with the sleeve of his shirt.

His head is yanked upwards, and Finney whimpers, frightened eyes meeting furious ones. His dad has a hold on Finney's hair, and he drags him over to the counter.

''Dad- '' Finney tries, squirming.

He hears the clink of metal, and Finney can't help crying out. He pushes against his dad and makes a desperate run for the stairs, because no matter how many times this has happened, no matter how old or big Finney gets, he will forever be afraid of his dad.

He feels a hand grab the back of his shirt, and screams. The sound startles both of them, and his dad pulls back too hard.

Finney watches in almost slow motion as the side of the counter rushes up to meet him, and the last thing he hears is the frustrated

shout of his dad next to him, before everything goes black.

****

''Finney.''

His head pounds, and the previous events flood sluggishly through his mind.

He groans, forcing his eyes open. The kitchen is dark, and he props himself up on his elbows.

''Finney, are you okay?''

Finney turns to his right, blinking at the sight of his sister beside him.

Gwen's face is twisted with worry, and her hands flutter by her side irregularly.

''I thought you were at Susie's?''

''I left my English book here; I just came to get it before school, and I saw you on the floor when I was getting a glass of water.'' She explains, pointing to the forgotten glass on the counter.

''Oh,'' Finney replies, and then furrows his eyebrows. ''Wait. Before school?''

Gwen bites her bottom lip, eyes shining with concern. ''Finney, it's the morning. School starts in thirty minutes.''

Finney gapes at her. He's been knocked out the whole night?

''What happened? Your face is all bruised.'' Gwen says, fingers brushing his cheek.

Finney lifts himself up, wincing. The pain killers the doctor gave him have worn off, and he shuffles over to the cupboards in hope of a stray paracetamol.

''Don't worry,'' he says, pushing random spices to the side. ''It

wasn't dad."

Gwen huffs. ''As if that makes me feel any better.'' She says, grabbing her bag from the ground.

Finney comes up with a singular pill, and he swallows it dry. It'll have to do for now.

''Are you going to tell me why you were on the floor?''

Finney glances over his shoulder. ''Later.''

Gwen sighs but doesn't argue. She turns away.

''Is dad gone?'' He asks, closing the cupboard.

''He was gone before I got here.'' Gwen calls, already by the front door.

''You go ahead. I need to get changed.'' Finney calls back, scowling at the sight of his dirty t-shirt when he looks down.

''Okay, be fast though!''

The front door slams shut, and Finney makes his way upstairs.

He changes quickly, throwing on a simple black t-shirt and jeans. He hurries to the bathroom, grimacing when he catches sight of himself in the mirror. There's a nasty bruise on the plane of his cheekbone, and a deep cut by his temple. The bags under his eyes look like bruises themselves, and all in all, he resembles a corpse. He can't do anything about it though, so he brushes his teeth and splashes water onto his face.

His school bag is by the kitchen, and he runs down to collect it, hopping into trainers on the way to the door.

It's not too cold outside – it's only October, so the winter chill hasn't quite made itself known yet.

The walk to school isn't too long, and from a glimpse of his cracked phone, he knows he still has fifteen minutes until first period.

The paracetamol has kicked in, and Finney no longer feels like he's going to collapse, which is always nice.

He's just trying to remember what exactly his first class is, when he

hears a shout from across the street.

Robin, Bruce, and Vance are walking just ahead of him, on the other side of the road. Bruce is half on Vance's back, seemly trying to grab for something that Vance is holding out of his reach. Robin is watching them, cheering Bruce on.

Finney doesn't know what to do. Does he keep walking, and hope they don't look behind them? Or does he hide, and wait till they're out of sight?

Unfortunately, Finney's terrible luck strikes again, because in the process of trying to throw Bruce off him, Vance twists and sees him standing there.

Finney snaps his gaze away and keeps walking. He almost thinks he's gotten away with it, but then he hears footsteps on the concrete.

''Finney!'' Bruce's voice exclaims, and Finney considers the consequences of just flat out sprinting away.

He braces himself and raises his head. Bruce is leading them, a big smile on his face, while Robin and Vance lag after.

''Hi.'' Finney greets, wanting the ground to swallow him up.

''Woah, you look rough.'' Bruce says, giving him a once over.

Finney cringes. ''Yup.''

''Are you okay though? We were worried about you yesterday.'' Bruce tells him, motioning to the boys behind him.

Finney raises an eyebrow. ''I'm fine. One of my ribs is broken, but other than that everything is okay.'' He says, highly doubting the so called 'worry'.

''What about your head?'' Vance asks, and then looks confused, like he didn't mean to actually show concern.

''Oh, yeah, my head. Uh, they said I have a minor concussion, although I suspect it has upgraded to major.'' Finney laughs, and then all too abruptly stops.

He didn't mean to say that. If anyone questions it, he'll just blame it on the not-so-minor concussion.

''What's that supposed to mean?''

Finney looks at Robin, because of course it's him that points the mistake out. He's been quiet this whole conversation, but now he steps forward, eyeing Finney critically.

''Ah, sorry. Must be the concussion.'' Great, now he sounds like an idiot.

Finney coughs and begins walking hurriedly onward. ''Well, this conversation has been lovely, but schools about to start, so I guess I'll see you guys later.''

''Hey, why don't we go together? We're all going the same way, after all.'' Bruce suggests, and Finney wishes he wasn't so goddamn nice.

Finney smiles awkwardly and falls into step with the three others.

''Were you in the hospital long?'' Bruce questions, and Finney takes it all back; he's so thankful for Bruce's kindness.

Finney jumps at the chance to go on a long vent about how much he suffered yesterday, grinning when he finds out that Bruce hates hospitals too.

Vance occasionally chimes in with his own complaints, while Robin stays dead silent for the entire walk. Finney can't say he's too upset about it.

Bruce and him then move on to baseball talk, and Bruce tells him all about his upcoming game, and how hard he's been training for it.

''I'm just so nervous – this is such an important game.'' He says, ringing his hands together.

Finney shakes his head. ''Don't even worry, you're literally a baseball prodigy. I'm sure you'll do great.''

''That's the thing though, everyone has such high expectations. What if I don't meet them?'' Bruce frowns, a crinkle between his eyebrows.

Before Finney can reassure him, Vance slings an arm around Bruce, pulling him into his side.

''Fuck everyone's expectations. Who cares what they think? It's not

about them, it's about you.'' Vance says heatedly.

Bruce beams at him and squeezes his arm.

''Thank you, Vance.'' He replies sincerely.

Finney watches in a mix of amusement and disbelief as the tips of Vance's ears turn bright red, and he has to stifle a giggle at the idea of *Vance Hopper* getting flustered.

''They're cute, aren't they?''

Finney looks to his left. Robin has moved to walk beside him, and he's observing his friends with a fond expression.

A spark of jealousy shoots through Finney, so bitter he almost chokes on it.

It's not fair, he thinks. *I want Robin to look at* ***me*** *like that.*

He wonders if Robin possesses a heart, because this is too cruel. Does he even know what he's doing?

The answer is no, he probably doesn't. He doesn't understand how Finney feels, and he never will, because Robin *left* him.

The school gates appear in front of them, and the tension in Finney's spine releases. Finally, he can be left alone.

''What's your first class Finney?'' Bruce inquires, ducking out of Vance's hold.

''Biology?''

Bruce laughs. ''You don't sound so sure.''

''I honestly don't know. I'm just going to hope it's biology.'' Finney responds sheepishly.

''Well, good luck with that. It was nice walking with you.'' Bruce says, his eyes genuine.

Vance gives a little wave this time, and Finney waves back.

''Bye, Finn.'' Robin says softly.

''Bye.'' Finney mutters back, starting to walk away.

''We'll see you at lunch, Finney!''

Finney jolts his gaze up, watching as Bruce smiles, looking smug.

Before he can deny it, the boys are gone, leaving Finney alone.

Finney moves in the direction of his biology class, thinking about Bruce's words. He'll just have to camp out in the library. There's no way he's sitting with them at lunch, he can't imagine anything worse.

He reaches his class, and sighs in relief when he recognises that yes, he is meant to be here. He heads straight to the back, snagging a corner seat.

His head hurts, and he rests it on the wooden desk. He's tired, he realises. Apparently being knocked out doesn't count as real sleep.

The weight of everything comes crashing down, and Finney feels like crying. He's not quite sure how much more of his dad he can take, and now that Robin has suddenly decided to re-enter his life, everything feels a bit too heavy.

It's at times like these that Finney thinks of his mom, and he wonders if this is how she felt – trapped in her own life.

He can't ever leave Gwen, though. He can't do that to her.

The teacher comes in and gets out the attendance sheet, calling out names one by one.

Finney's head hasn't stopped throbbing, and now he has the added stress of figuring out how to avoid Bruce, Robin, and Vance at lunch.

It's going to be a long couple of hours.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

''I don't understand why you don't get a tutor.'' Vance complains, sitting on the opposite side of the table to Robin.

Robin mumbles something under his breath, and Bruce leans forward.

''Come again?''

''Everyone's too scared of me.'' Robin says louder, flushing.

Robin fiddles with his hair, and Finney's heart aches.

''I can tutor you.'' Finney blurts before he can stop himself.

Chapter Notes

Hiiii!! Okay, I know I said this was being posted on Tuesday, but I finished writing it today, so I can't help posting it a little early :))

I had loads of fun with this chapter, so I hope you have fun reading it!! The next chapter is obviously gonna be about Finney tutoring Robin, and I'm so excited to write it omg. In the meantime, I hope you all enjoy this, and I hope everyone's having a lovely day!!

Trigger warnings: vague mentions of child abuse, and bullying. There's also a scene where Finney's kinda having a panic attack? It's not exactly that, but he's in a lot of pain, and some of the symptoms described are panic attack like. Let me know if I've forgotten anything!!

The dreaded lunch bell finally rings, and Finney packs his things as slow as possible. He not only has to avoid the usual bullies in the hallways, but now he has to also sneak past Robin, Bruce and Vance.

However, Finney is a master of stealth, and all he needs to do is get to the library unseen. Consider it done.

He makes his way out of the classroom, glancing left and right

down the hallway to check if the coast is clear. With no enemies in sight, Finney sets off, moving towards the stairs. He's currently on the second floor, while the library is on the first, so he's got a bit of a journey ahead.

Finney ducks into an empty classroom when he spots curly red hair in the distance, crouching behind the door. When he deems it safe, Finney continues on, feeling tense.

He's more alert than he's been in ages, and the thrill of adrenaline rushes through his body. He's not sure why this is so exhilarating, although he supposes it's like a game – a game of hide and seek.

He feels rather like a mouse dodging a cat's greedy paws, and it thrills him. It's been so long since he's *felt* something.

Well, other than anger and fear, of course – but those are just his default emotions. This however, this *excites* him, throwing himself around corners at the slightest glimpse of blonde.

He forgets why he was so stressed about this earlier, and makes a sprint for the stairs, weaving in and out of the crowds.

He grins when he makes it to the bottom unscathed and sets off towards the library. Maybe it's a little sad he's having so much fun, but right now Finney doesn't care.

He's so close to sanctuary; the library doors are in sight.

Nothing in Finney's life ever goes to plan though, and within an arm's reach, Finney knocks into someone who appears from thin air.

They go down hard, and Finney hits the ground with a loud thump. It takes everything in himself to not scream in agony, and he wonders if this is what dying is like.

His ears are ringing sharply, and sparks of electricity shoot up and down his legs.

''Finney?''

His head is underwater, and he can't *breathe, please, he can't breathe.*

''Finney!''

It feels as though a rib has pierced his lungs, and his head going to explode. His heartbeat reverberates through his skull – *ba-dum ba-dum*

ba-dum – and he thinks this is worse than when he received all the injuries.

''*Finn*.''

Finney gasps, choking on nothing. Someone's stroking through his curls soothingly, and he can't help leaning into the touch.

He inhales, and exhales. Inhales, exhales. Over and over.

It takes a while to realise he's curled into a tight ball, and he slowly unravels, stretching his limbs.

The lingering pain isn't too bad, and he manages to finally look up.

Robin is sitting next to him, his hand still caressing Finney's hair. He's struck with a sudden sense of déjà vu, and he pulls himself up properly, Robin's fingers slipping away.

''Are you okay?'' Robin murmurs, and his eyes, *oh* his eyes, are so, so gentle.

Finney doesn't know what to do with an expression like that being directed at him. He ends up looking away from Robin, instead turning to the right of him.

He can't say he's surprised to see both Bruce and Vance there, and he gives them a tired smile.

''Hi,'' he greets, swallowing roughly. ''Who did I crash into?''

Bruce nods at Vance, and Finney looks at him apologetically.

''I'm really sorry.''

''It's fine, I guess.'' Vance says gruffly.

''Are you okay? It looked a bit like you broke another rib, there.'' Bruce says, his gaze running worriedly over Finney.

''Felt a bit like it too,'' Finney laughs. ''But no, I think I'm good.''

Bruce's expression is sympathetic, and he stands, offering a hand to Finney.

Finney takes it, still dutifully ignoring the eyes that are burning into the side of his face. He can't deal with the faux concern right now.

It's at that moment he realises he's failed the mission, and he stifles a groan. Although maybe Bruce was joking? He frowns at the thought, torn. If Bruce wasn't really being serious, then that's obviously a good thing. Right?

Of course it is. Finney doesn't need company; he's fine the way he is. Friends are… well, Finney doesn't need them, that's for sure.

He's not lonely. He's happy.

''Finney?''

He snaps out of his thoughts. The three boys are watching him expectantly. He's completely missed whatever they're talking about.

''Say that again?'' He asks, embarrassed.

''There's a secret spot at the back of the library, where we always go at lunch.'' Bruce answers, opening the library door.

Finney doesn't have the chance to question how that's relevant, before a warm hand slips into his, and Robin is tugging him forward.

He lets it happen, too shocked to pull away. Robin's palm is soft and Finney stares at their interwoven fingers, butterflies erupting in his stomach. And okay, sue him, maybe Finney's enjoying this, but can you blame him? He can allow a moment of weakness here and there – staying angry at Robin all the time is harder than it looks.

They make their way to the back of the library, and around a small corner Finney's never seen before, covered by shelves full of books, is a cosy looking table.

Robin releases his hold, and Finney mourns the loss, while Robin proceeds to throw himself into a chair.

''Ugh,'' He groans. ''I'm so glad to be out of that stupid maths class.''

''You still struggle with maths?'' Finney asks, and immediately regrets it.

There's a pause as everyone processes the 'still', and Finney cringes, praying no one points it out.

Thank goodness for Bruce, however, because he steps forward, chuckling.

''It's all Vance and I hear about, I swear.'' He says, rolling his eyes.

''I don't understand why you don't get a tutor.'' Vance complains, sitting on the opposite side of the table to Robin.

Robin mumbles something under his breath, and Bruce leans forward.

''Come again?''

''Everyone's too scared of me.'' Robin says louder, flushing.

Robin fiddles with his hair, and Finney's heart aches.

''I can tutor you.'' Finney blurts before he can stop himself.

He closes his eyes briefly and wonders how life got to this point – there is no way he just offered that.

There's another pause, this one longer than the last.

Finney's about to take it back, but when he looks up, he shuts his mouth.

Robin's dark eyes shine, lit up with hope.

''Really?'' He says, voice a little breathy.

Finney nods, and Robin beams at him.

Well. That just happened.

''Is your number still the same?'' Robin gets his phone out, waiting for confirmation.

''Yup.''

Finney hears a ding from his own phone seconds later and sees Robin has just sent a quick 'Hey'. He hesitates on what to name Robin in his contacts but ends up just typing his full name.

''I'll text you later, then.'' Robin says.

Finney smiles awkwardly and pulls out a chair next to Vance, slumping into it.

Bruce takes a seat at the head of the table, looking happy.

''I'm so glad I don't have to hear you complain anymore.'' He says, giggling when Robin swats at him playfully.

The four of them sit there chatting and eating, and despite Finney's initial discomfort, he finds himself having fun.

He discovers that Vance has a pet bunny called Fluffy and has to run around the table when Vance chases him for teasing. He can't help it, he would've thought Vance had a snake, or rat, or something not quite so… fluffy.

Finney says as much, and the other boy huffs, showing him the deep scar on his thumb from when Fluffy bit him. Vance tells him that bunnies are very 'manly' pets, and Finney has to agree.

Bruce, on the other hand, owns a tarantula, and when Finney hears this, he does a double take, mouth falling open.

''You're messing with me.'' He declares, eyes wide.

All three boys shake their heads, and Finney stares at Bruce, seeing him in whole new light.

According to Bruce, tarantula's need love too. Finney secretly thinks he's insane, but he doesn't dare say anything with the way Vance is eyeing him.

''Her name is Rose, and she's the size of my palm.'' Bruce informs him, showing Finney his hand.

Finney is then asked if he owns any animals, and before he can reply, Robin snorts, and appears to be desperately trying to keep a straight face.

Finney raises his eyebrows and crosses his arms.

''What?''

Robin lips quirk. ''Do you remember that fish you had?''

The fact that Robin is referencing their old friendship doesn't register in the way it should, and Finney groans loudly.

''That wasn't my fault!'' He insists.

Bruce and Vance watch with confused expressions, and Finney sighs, explaining that four years ago, his dad let both him and his

sister get a fish, after his sister had begged for one.

He goes on to say that two days after they got the fish, it jumped out of its tank, and fell onto the radiator, dying within seconds.

By that point, Robin is half on the floor, wheezing. Bruce has his head in his hands, and Vance is cackling so noisily that Finney's afraid they'll get told off.

(He doesn't mention the part where his dad beat him and Gwen after. Not even Robin knows that.)

''Finn isn't allowed near animals anymore.'' Robin says, finally calming down.

''Definitely for the best.'' Bruce remarks, and Finney just scoffs, waving them away.

The rest of the lunch break is somehow spent debating the best ice cream flavour, and while listening to Vance yell about how great chocolate is, Finney thinks about how normal this is.

Finney hasn't had a friend since Robin, and he marvels at how easy it is to just *be*.

For him, lunch usually consists of either hiding in the bathroom, or being beat up in the bathroom. He can't remember the last time that wasn't how he spent the hour, and isn't that sad?

He's not sure what to think of Robin. It's all very confusing, and if he thinks about it too hard, it hurts his head.

Simply put, he both loves and hates him.

He gushes over Robin's sparkling eyes, and his long, wavy hair. He feels his heart stop when Robin looks at him with that smirk, and that slight eyebrow raise. He ogles his tanned arms, and the way the muscles flex when Robin moves. He's even fond of that dumb bandana that still, after all these years, Robin refuses to part with.

In conclusion, Finney couldn't love Robin more if he *tried*.

But oh, does he despise Robin all the same. He's furious with him, the way Robin apparently thinks he can walk in and out of Finney's life whenever he pleases. He trembles with anger every time Robin looks at him warily, like *Finney's* the one who ruined everything. Like

he's *scared* of Finney.

Therefore, Finney hates Robin.

He's being pulled in two different directions, and there is *nothing* in this world he wants more than to be freely in love with Robin Arellano, but that's not fair.

It's not fair on Finney, because Robin broke his heart three years ago, and he's yet to piece it back together.

And so, until Robin faces him and gives Finney an explanation, he won't forgive him.

He'll be nice, and he'll joke around, and he'll do this dumb tutoring thing, but he won't give anything more than that.

Because Finney has been pushed around his entire life, and he'll die before he lets Robin do it too.

It burns all the more when he knows that once upon a time, Robin used to cry if he ever hurt Finney.

One of his favourite memories, is when they were twelve, and playing in Robin's garden with a football, just kicking it around. Robin had slowly been getting more and more frustrated, because he couldn't steal the ball away from Finney's feet.

Finney's still not quite sure what happened, but he knows that one second, he was running across the grass, ball just ahead of him, and the next second, he was slamming into the ground and landing badly on his right shoulder.

Nothing was broken, but he was a twelve-year-old kid, and he burst into tears, grasping his shoulder.

He remembers Robin frantically shouting for help, and later, when Robin's mom had given him some ice to press against the forming bruise, Finney had looked to Robin, expecting to see the usual smirk.

Instead, Robin's lips shook, and tears glistened blindingly.

Finney was stunned, and he didn't move as Robin reached forwards, clutching Finney's hands in his own.

''I'm so sorry,'' he'd said, his expression lined with regret. ''I didn't mean to hurt you.''

Finney had begun to open his mouth, wanting to tell him that it was okay, but Robin had squeezed his palms, shaking his head.

''I swear, I won't ever harm you again. *I promise.*'' He'd finished, pulling Finney into a gentle embrace, careful not to jostle his shoulder.

Finney has liked Robin since they first met, but he thinks that was the moment he realised he loved him.

He watches Robin now, as he packs up his bag, getting ready for his next class, and he grieves silently. Where is the boy who promised to never hurt him? Certainly not here, because this Robin is new, and doesn't seem to mind torturing Finney cruelly.

They make their way out of the library and say their goodbyes. Bruce says they can walk home together, but Finney declines, replying that he's walking home with his sister.

Bruce smiles and says it's fine, that he can come sit with them again after the weekend is over. They'll see him at the library doors on Monday.

Finney agrees, and starts walking to his next class, a small grin tugging at his lips.

The rest of the day passes uneventfully, and he meets Gwen at the school gates.

''You look happy.'' She comments, and he looks at her quizzically.

''I do?''

She narrows her eyes, her gaze seemingly going through him.

''Yeah. You do.''

Neither of them says anything more, but he can feel her stare on him the rest of the walk home.

Their dad isn't back from work yet, so Finney lets himself relax, stretching out on the couch, and flicking the tv on.

He hears a chime from his phone and digs it out of his backpack.

It's from Robin, asking what times Finney is free to tutor him.

He wavers momentarily, but texts back, and then places his phone down.

Three minutes go by before Finney hears the tell-tale *ding!*

Tomorrow at 2pm sounds great, Finn. I'll see you then.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

''Ah sorry, I forgot,'' Robin grins. ''You're gonna work for NASA.''

An uneasy silence descends upon them quickly, and Robin's smile fades.

Finney returns to following the cracks in the ceiling, his throat tight. He remembers when he used to gush about space, and rocket ships, and how cool it all was, while Robin listened fondly.

Of course, that was years ago, before Robin cut him off.

Chapter Notes

I know, I know, I said this was being posted Thursday/Friday, but come on! I couldn't help myself, really, I was just too excited.

Welcome to the fourth chapter, I hope everyone's having a great day :)) I think my fingers are about to fall off, honestly, I've been writing about eight hours straight haha. I was desperate to post this early, so here you are, I hope everyone enjoys!!

I know that Gwen's a bit ooc in this, but let's be real, her mum committed suicide and her dad's abusive, and on top of that she's a little kid. I think her perception of love/relationships is definitely messed up, and I couldn't help writing her to be more angsty, it was just too tempting.

If you have any ideas as to why Robin did what he did, let me know!! I'd love to know your thoughts, and obviously I won't spoil anything, but it'd be interesting to hear everyone's theories <33

Trigger warnings: mentions of child abuse, alcohol/drinking, implied suicide/mentions of a dead character, and I think that's everything but let me know if I missed something!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Finney might be panicking.

He has thirty minutes before the tutoring session, and he's spending

the time wisely.

In other words, he's pacing around his room, breath coming in short gasps.

He woke up this morning, and realised he completely forgot to arrange a place to meet with Robin. And so, he texted the other boy, asking his opinion.

It was a terrible idea. He should have just suggested something first, what on earth was he thinking?

Because now Finney is meant to be going around to Robin's *house*, and he can't believe he agreed to it.

Yeah. He's definitely panicking.

Perhaps he should just cancel – pretend he's sick, or his ribs are flaring up. He stares at his phone where it lies on his bed, and falters.

He can't do that. He can't; it's too mean, and Finney's never been decent at lying anyway. Robin will see straight through him, and then it will turn into a big mess, and Finney will feel even worse.

He inhales deeply, pressing the heel of his palms against his eyes. For gods' sake, he's not even that great at maths.

Sure, he understands it most of the time, and he does well on tests, but it's not like he's a genius. There are thirty people in his class, and he comes about eighth.

Which is great, really, but it's not first, is it?

So maybe he's not even qualified for this – for all he knows, Robin might rank seventh, and then Finney will just end up embarrassing himself.

''Finney?''

He startles, twirling round.

Gwen is standing in the doorway, observing him.

''Yeah?'' He replies, putting a hand over his racing heart.

She narrows her eyes, and Finney suddenly feels rather tense. Gwen is scarily good at reading him, and right now she's looking him like

she knows what he's thinking.

''Are you going somewhere?'' She asks, and her tone is neutral, not suspicious.

That doesn't mean anything when it comes to his sister, however. She's always been the better liar.

Finney nods, not trusting himself to speak.

''Hm. Okay.''

She wanders away, and Finney lets out a big breath, untensing. Even though he's the older sibling, Gwen frightens him a little, and he doesn't feel like trying to explain why he's tutoring Robin.

Finney remembers that after an entire week of Robin ignoring him, he finally realised that their friendship was over, and he came home from school in tears.

He'd run upstairs and shut his door, curling up in his bed and sobbing his eyes out for hours on end.

He also remembers Gwen coming in, a tray balanced on her small hands. She'd brought him a bowl of his favourite cereal, and a glass of his favourite drink.

He'd dragged himself from under the comfort of his duvet when he heard her open the door, and upon seeing the tray, he'd burst into another round of tears.

Later, when he'd managed to calm down, Gwen had sat on the edge of his bed, and asked what was wrong.

The thing about growing up with an abusive father, is that they raised each other, in a way. So, of course Finney told Gwen about Robin, because that's just how it was between them. They knew everything about one another, and this was going to be no different.

''… and I just don't understand,'' he'd been saying, voice shaking. ''What did I do so wrong?''

Gwen's expression had been carefully blank throughout his story, but now she clenched her jaw, lips pursed.

''Nothing,'' She replied firmly. ''Nothing at all, Finney.''

''Then *why* is he leaving me?'' Finney begged her, desperate for an answer.

''Because sometimes, Finney, the people you love leave you. That's just how it works.''

The deeper meaning hadn't been lost on Finney, and he'd shaken his head furiously.

''Robin is not our mother.''

''I know *that,*'' she said, glaring. ''But you love him, yes?''

''I do,'' Finney whispered, hanging his head. ''I do.''

''Then they are exactly the same. The people you love hurt you without remorse, and that's that.'' She finished, standing up.

Finney had watched her walk away, and he'd wanted to scream.

Gwen was cruel, and too old for her youth, but she was so, so hurt, and Finney didn't know how to change that.

He wanted to yell, and shout, and cry, because their parents had ruined his baby sister's perception of love, and he didn't know how to fix it.

And he wanted to weep, and shriek, and howl, because Robin had ruined *his* perception of love, and he didn't know how to fix it, either.

So here he stands, in the middle of his bedroom, with fifteen minutes until the tutoring session, contemplating.

To go or to stay is the question, and Finney gazes at the ceiling in hopes of some higher being showing guidance.

The ceiling remains empty, and Finney sighs, his shoulders slumping.

He reaches for his phone and bag, and groans in frustration.

What is it people say? 'Love conquers all', right?

He makes his way downstairs quietly; his dad is on the couch, and the last thing Finney wants is to aggravate him.

He slips out the door unseen and begins the seven-minute journey

to Robin's house, scowling when he realises that he doesn't even have to think about where to go, it's simply muscle memory.

It's a relatively nice day, and Finney basks in the glow of the sunshine.

He's a summer person, really, and the thought of the upcoming winter season causes him to wrinkle his nose. He hates the rainy cold, and he's not at all fond of snow.

He knows that people would argue that Christmas makes up for the freezing temperatures, but well, it's never a pleasant time for their family.

Mom's anniversary is on the twenty-fourth, and for that week, dad isn't sober for even a second, and the house quickly fills full of empty bottles.

Last year, it was so bad in the living room that you physically couldn't get into the room, because wherever you stepped, there was a bottle.

Finney hopes that this year will be a little better, though he doubts it.

All too soon, the Arellano household comes into view, and Finney pauses outside of it, suddenly terrified.

He rolls his shoulders back and shakes out his arms, hyping himself up.

Inhale, hold, exhale. Inhale, hold, exhale.

He's fine, this is fine, everything is totally, utterly, fine.

He strides confidently up to the front door, and knocks three times, each one harder than the last.

He's a bit early, but that won't matter – or he hopes it won't anyway.

Finney's starting to think he's somehow got the wrong house, which would be ridiculous, but abruptly the door flies open, and as fast as it appeared, his confidence drains away.

Robin stands there, looking like he just ran a marathon. His cheeks are bright pink, and his chest heaves with every breath.

''Are you okay?'' Finney has to ask, his eyes wide.

''Of course.'' Robin says pleasantly.

Finney stares at him suspiciously as he ducks into the hallway, and Robin closes the door behind him.

''My *mamá's* out right now, so we have the house to ourselves.'' Robin tells him, and Finney's relieved; he can't handle facing Robin's mom right now.

''So, where are we doing this?'' Finney asks, and prays Robin says the living room, or the kitchen, or anything other than-

''My bedroom.''

Finney deflates but doesn't argue, and he follows Robin up the stairs. He's somehow more nervous to be in Robin's bedroom, than he is to actually be tutoring him.

Which is irrational, but he can't help it. Being in someone's room feels like an intimate thing, and there are too many old emotions that come with Robin's.

He'll have to just suck it up though, because they reach the dreaded door, and Robin pushes it open without a second thought.

It's exactly the way he recalls it being, and he steps in, glancing around.

Movie posters cover the walls, and Finney has to bite back a smile when he sees the one of Texas Chainsaw Massacre right above Robin's bed.

The window opposite the door is wide open, and the fall air rushes in as the October sun gleams across the space.

Robin's closet sits against the left wall, and Finney can spy the collection of muscle tees taking up almost all of the hangers. He also spots the back-up bandanas that Robin keeps, just in case he loses his current one.

He realises that the walls have been painted white, and he frowns, missing the pretty blue they once were.

A bunch of books and papers litter the floor, and Finney raises his eyebrows, nodding to the mess.

''What's all that?''

''Maths.'' Robin sighs, his tone full of defeat.

Finney laughs, taking a place on the carpeted floor. Robin copies him, and Finney dutifully ignores the way Robin's knee rests against his own.

''Let's get started then, shall we?''

As it turns out, Finney was worried for nothing, because Robin really is horrible at maths. Even worse than he remembers, in fact, and it takes a few minutes to even work out how to start.

They get into a nice rhythm soon thankfully, and Finney is pleased to find Robin listening to his explanations very carefully.

There's a moment however, where Finney looks up and catches Robin watching him, something hidden in his expression.

''What?'' Finney says, and Robin blinks.

''Huh?''

''You're staring at me.'' Finney says, and Robin blinks again.

''Oh.''

Finney's jaw ticks, and he leans forward to poke Robin's shoulder.

''*Why* are you staring at me?''

Finney watches as Robin's mouth opens and closes, before he visibly swallows, and turns back to the equations in front of them.

''I must have zoned out, sorry. Let's continue.'' He says, and that's that apparently.

Finney tries not to analyse it too much, but he's an overthinker at heart, and he can't help wondering if there's something deeper there than Robin simply 'zoning out'.

The last thing he wants to do is get his hopes up, though, so he forgets about it, focusing on the papers in his hands.

The session lasts for a couple more hours after that incident, and eventually they're both so math-ed out that they throw away their

pens, and collapse into star fish positions on the ground.

''I think I'm hallucinating numbers right now. They're burned into my retinas.'' Robin groans, scrubbing at his eyeballs.

Finney laughs, tracing the patterns on the ceiling with his gaze.

''My brain was about to explode because of that last question, and you literally *squealed* in excitement when you saw it. Are you insane?'' Robin questions, completely serious.

Finney laughs again, looking sheepish.

''I can't help it! It's fun, sometimes.''

Robin scoffs, rolling his eyes.

''*Fun,''* He mocks under his breath, and then louder: ''It was terrible!''

Finney shakes his head. ''You did fine, honestly. I hope I wasn't too bad of a tutor?''

''Finn, you should be a maths teacher or something. Seriously, you explain things so easy.'' Robin tells him, and Finney giggles, looking over at him.

''Thanks, but no. That sounds very boring.''

''Ah sorry, I forgot,'' Robin grins. ''You're gonna work for NASA.''

An uneasy silence descends upon them quickly, and Robin's smile fades.

Finney returns to following the cracks in the ceiling, his throat tight. He remembers when he used to gush about space, and rocket ships, and how *cool* it all was, while Robin listened fondly.

Of course, that was years ago, before Robin cut him off.

''Sorry,'' Robin mutters. ''I didn't mean…''

Finney doesn't speak, and his nails dig into the soft skin of his palms.

The words are on the tip of his tongue: *what happened to us?* He wants so desperately to ask, but he's afraid, and he chokes, forcing

them back down.

He's scared of what Robin's answer will be. Every night, for the last three years, he's told himself that Robin had a reason. That something happened, and Robin did it for a *reason.*

But what if that's not the case? What if Robin grew tired of him, or suddenly stopped liking him?

What if… what if Robin realised how Finney felt? And that's why he pulled away, refusing to speak, or be near, or hell, breathe the same *air*, as Finney.

Finney doesn't want to know. It would break him, he thinks.

He was a coward back then, and he's a coward now, too.

''I should go,'' he says swiftly, standing up. ''My dad will wonder where I am.''

Robin watches him, and his eyes are so painfully woeful that Finney almost forgets himself and does something foolish, like *hug* Robin.

Luckily, his self-control wins out, and he picks up his bag and phone, back firmly to the brunette on the floor.

When he turns around, Robin is pushing himself up, and he gestures to the door.

''I'll walk you out.''

Finney nods, and they make their way downstairs, neither one talking. They reach the front door, and Robin opens it, looking regretful.

''Thank you for coming over,'' he says. ''I really appreciate it.''

''Of course.'' Finney replies, stepping outside.

Robin bites his bottom lip, shuffling his feet.

''I'll text you when I'm next free, for tutoring?'' He says, and his tone is vulnerable, like he expects Finney to say no.

Finney closes his eyes, for just a moment.

His heart and his mind are battling, and he wonders why he bothers pretending that it’s a fair fight.

Finney opens his eyes, meeting Robin’s dark ones.

‘’Sure,’’ he says, backing away. ‘’Text me.’’

The heart wins, every single time.

Chapter End Notes

I've got a couple of busy days ahead of me, so I'll probably be updating sometime this weekend :))

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

> ‘’Please! I’m sorry, I’m sorry, please!’’ She’s crying, and Finney stops breathing.
>
> The second thing he registers, shutting the door behind him, is the tell-tale sound of leather meeting skin, and Finney surges forward, his bag dropping from his grip.
>
> He rounds the corner to the kitchen and takes in the sight before him, the blood draining from his face.

Chapter Notes

> Honestly, you guys should just ignore me whenever I say what day I'm updating, cause apparently, I'm incapable of sticking to a schedule.
>
> But hello!! Welcome, everyone, to the fifth chapter!! I do hope you're all having a great day/night, and if not, I'm sending you all the love ＜33
>
> Unfortunately, I can't seem to stop hurting our poor boy, so I apologise in advance, this is a sad one :((Although, I couldn't help making it a little funny by randomly introducing Vance's mum. In my mind, Vance is a huge mama's boy, and I kinda wanted to start working that into this story lol.
>
> Trigger warnings: extremely graphic descriptions of child abuse, mentions of alcohol, mentions of death. Please let me know if I need to add something!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It’s Sunday, and Finney is beginning to dread the idea of going to school tomorrow.

He’s been so stressed about it, in fact, that he’s taking a walk to try and clear his mind.

Obviously, it’s not working, because all he can think about is sitting with Robin at lunch time.

All things considered; the tutoring session went a lot better than expected. However, he's a little frustrated with Robin's behaviour.

What exactly was the deal with all the staring?

He can't tell what Robin's thinking, and it frustrates him to no end.

Finney sighs, wandering up the path to his house. Oh well, he'll have to try and find out tomorrow.

Any thoughts of Robin disappear when he opens the front door, the sound of shrieking connecting with his ears, and causing him to freeze.

''I'm sorry!'' Someone is weeping, and it takes a few beats for him to realise the voice belongs to Gwen.

''Please! I'm sorry, I'm sorry, please!'' She's crying, and Finney stops breathing.

The second thing he registers, shutting the door behind him, is the tell-tale sound of leather meeting skin, and Finney surges forward, his bag dropping from his grip.

He rounds the corner to the kitchen and takes in the sight before him, the blood draining from his face.

Gwen is leaning against the counter, and her body trembles with every gasp she takes, sobs falling out of her mouth uncontrollably.

Her cheeks are red and blotchy, and tears slide down the bridge of her nose like a waterfall, dripping onto the surface below.

Finney rips his gaze away from her pained face, looking further past her.

Terrence Blake stands in all his glory, one hand wrapped around a half full beer bottle, while the other wields a brown leather belt.

His dad's eyebrows are scrunched in concentration, eyes wild with anger. His left hand clasps the bottle so forcefully, his knuckles are stark white, and Finney watches as he rains another hit down upon Gwen.

''This is your own fault, young lady!'' His dad spits, and Finney sees *red.*

He's not sure what overcomes him, but it's as though every emotion he's felt in the past couple of days comes rising through him, and his mind blanks out.

He channels the frustration, the confusion, the fury, and the hatred he's been feeling, and he launches himself ahead, crashing into his dad with the force of a whirlwind.

On a normal day, Finney would simply beg his dad to leave Gwen alone, however, today is no normal day, and Finney and his dad go hurtling onto the tiled floor.

It's a mess of limbs, and before Finney can really think about it, he zeros in on his dad's face, draws back his fist, and *punches* him.

Time stops for a moment, and his dad stares at him in disbelief. Finney stares back, equally shocked.

The disbelief quickly turns to pure, unadulterated rage, and Finney doesn't even have time to be scared, before his dad grabs his throat, rolling over.

''I'm going to kill you.'' His dad hisses, and Finney grasps quite suddenly that he's being serious.

Fear takes hold, and Finney thrashes, desperate to get away, but his dad is strong, and he pins Finney down like a fly stuck in a web.

Hands are tight around Finney's neck, and he kicks at the body above him, strangled whines caught in his chest.

''Don't. Please.'' He begs with what little breath he has left.

His dad either doesn't hear him, or doesn't care, because he just squeezes tighter, and Finney's brain is static.

Seconds tick by. His body is numb.

I'm dying, he thinks through the blurriness. *Please, help me.*

From far away, Finney can hear someone screaming his name, and he vaguely recognises that it's Gwen.

The pain is fading, and it's quiet, only one thing left running through his mind.

I never told Robin I loved him; he thinks. *I wish I did.*

Black threatens his vision, and Finney closes his eyes–

Abruptly, the hands are ripped from his neck.

Finney lies still; everything feels too slow. He can't figure out what's happening, and so he lies on the cold ground, not moving.

All at once, air rushes into his lungs, and he wheezes, inhaling big gulps.

There are salty teardrops falling onto his tongue, but he doesn't dare close his mouth, terrified of his breath being stolen again.

He hears a commotion beside him, so he turns his head, and immediately feels like he's dying all over again.

Because his dad and his sister are wrestling, and he realises that Gwen must have tackled their dad in a frantic attempt to save Finney.

''Gwen!'' Finney chokes out, pushing himself up on his elbows.

His sister is fourteen, skinny, and short. She has no chance against their dad, and that much is made certain when the man slaps her, the sound echoing around the room, and she collapses, a screech wrenched from her lips.

Finney's ribs flare agonizingly when he makes himself stand, but he ignores the ache, throwing his beaten body against his dad once again.

''Don't touch her!'' He shouts, shouldering the man away from Gwen.

His throat burns horribly with the force of the words, and he whimpers involuntarily, faltering.

His dad takes the opportunity to reel back, punching Finney so hard he sees stars, head whipping to the side.

Finney stumbles, and before he can blink, another fist comes flying towards him, catching him in the jaw.

His teeth rattle, and Finney bites his tongue, a sharp sting full of iron overwhelming his tastebuds.

He's fighting a losing battle, and Finney decides that he needs to jump ship before it's too late.

He takes a few steps back, out of his dad's range, and spits out a mouthful of blood. Glancing down, he confirms that Gwen's bruised, but okay, and so, he reaches down and takes her hand, pulling her up.

Their dad lunges at them, and Finney ducks out of the way, tugging Gwen to the right. There's smashed glass on the kitchen floor, from the bottle their dad had been holding, and although Finney's wearing sneakers, Gwen only has socks to protect her.

He lifts her by the waist, and runs through the pointy shards, praying the man doesn't have shoes on so he can't follow.

They skid round the corner, and Finney tosses Gwen's sneakers at her, grabbing his bag from where it was abandoned by the door.

He spots Gwen's backpack hanging on the coat rack, and slings that onto his shoulder, too.

Their dad bellows loudly from somewhere behind them, and as soon as Gwen finishes shoving her shoes on, Finney has the front door open, and they're darting out.

They sprint down the street, and Finney glimpses over his shoulder, relieved when he sees that their dad isn't pursuing them.

They run a bit further, before Gwen stops, huffing.

''I can't go anymore.'' She gasps, hands on her knees.

Finney shakes his head. ''It's fine, we don't need to keep going.''

They stand there, catching their breath. No one is about, thank goodness. Finney wouldn't be able to take the intrusive questions.

''Finney,'' Gwen says after a while. ''We're not… running away, are we?''

Finney snorts, smiling bitterly.

''I wish,'' He replies, and his voice is hoarse. ''No, it's just for tonight – until he calms down.''

Gwen nods, looking less troubled.

''What exactly is the plan, then?''

Finney reaches out, smoothing Gwen's hair down. He uses his

thumb to wipe the leftover tears, and pinches her cheeks until she laughs, swatting him away.

''Finney! Be serious!'' She giggles, and Finney holds his palms up, grinning.

''Sorry, sorry, I'll stop,'' he says. ''The plan is as follows: you're going to Susie's for the night.''

Gwen's smile fades. ''What about you?''

''I'll go to a friend's house.'' He says, and she narrows her eyes.

''But you don't have any friends.'' She points out, and Finney gapes at her.

''Now that's just simply not true!'' He sputters, deeply insulted.

She scoffs, rolling her eyes. ''Finney, I know you – you're a loser.''

Finney puts a hand over his heart in mock offence.

''I can't believe my own sister just called me a loser.'' He sniffs, and Gwen rolls her eyes again.

''Finney, come on. What are you really going to do?''

He drops the act, looking at her seriously.

''Gwen, I really do have a friend I can stay with, I'm not joking.''

She raises her eyebrows. ''Who?''

''Bruce Yamada.'' He answers, the lie spilling easily off his tongue.

Gwen blinks, taken aback. ''Seriously?''

Finney nods. ''Yeah. We got partnered up for lab, and we just really hit it off. He's super nice.''

She stares at him, and seems to find whatever she's looking for, because she sighs.

''Fine, I believe you. We'll meet at the school gates tomorrow, yeah?''

She leans forward to hug him, and Finney kisses the top of her

head.

''Be safe.'' He says, handing her bag over, and watching as she turns, walking toward Susie's house.

He stands there until she's out of sight, and then slumps, exhausted.

''Well,'' he says to himself. ''Now what, Finney?''

There's a small park, five minutes away, that he decides to go to.

He begins the journey, eternally thankful that the winter cold hasn't started taking over and that despite his short sleeves, he feels warm enough.

He arrives at the park within a few minutes, glad to see that it's empty, and picks out a bench to sit on.

He's not quite sure what his goal is, here, but hanging around the park is better than hanging around the streets, surely.

The time reads 8:46pm when he checks his phone, and he groans; he has to get through a full night on this dumb bench.

He hopes to God that the park stays quiet, and that no drunk teenagers interrupt his peace.

He attempts to treat his injuries – washing the blood out of his mouth with the last gulp of water in his bottle and rewrapping the old bandages covering his chest. He opens his camera app, grimacing when he spies the nasty bruise on the left side of his jaw. A smaller bruise accompanies it on his left cheekbone, and he thinks that's where his dad first landed a hit. There are handprints on his throat, and he sighs. That's going to be difficult to explain.

After that, he has nothing to do but wait. Sitting there is very boring, and he resorts to playing random games on his phone for entertainment.

The sun has long since set by the time he checks the clock again – 10:23pm, it says. Not even a full two hours have gone by.

He can't believe this is what his life has come to: sleeping on a park bench for the night because his father tried to murder him.

Not exactly an everyday occurrence, is it?

He huffs, and then makes a bit of a pillow out of his bag, lying down.

He supposes he may as well try to get to sleep, the faster he does, the faster he can leave this place.

He closes his eyes and allows the darkness to overcome him.

****

''Kid?''

He comes to awareness slowly, and the first thing he notices is that his body is painfully stiff.

''Kid? Are you okay?''

The second thing he notices, is the voice above him, and the hand on his arm, shaking him awake.

He opens his eyes, groaning when the sun blinds him.

He squints and pushes himself up. Where the hell is he?

Of course, that's when everything clicks, and he sits up properly, startling the woman standing next to him.

''Oh! You're alive!'' She exclaims, and Finney stares at her.

She looks to be about forty, and she's rather tall, towering over him. She has pretty blue eyes, and greying blonde hair, that curls out in a sort of lion's mane, and –

Hold on.

''Uh, you wouldn't happen to be related to a boy called Vance Hopper, would you?'' He asks, and he knows he sounds weird, but the resemblance is simply uncanny.

She blinks at him, and just as Finney's about to apologise and take it back, her eyes light up.

‘’You know my boy?’’

Finney can’t help but laugh a little, shocked.

‘’Wow,’’ he says. ‘’You two are identical.’’

She beams, looking awfully pleased.

‘’Are you a friend of his?’’ She inquires, and Finney pauses.

Is Vance Hopper a friend of his? No way, never. Are they *friendly*? …Yeah?

‘’Yes, ma’am,’’ He replies, lips quirking awkwardly. ‘’I’m Finney Blake.’’

Her eyebrows furrow, and Finney worried he’s said something wrong, but then her expression clears up, and she smiles gently.

‘’It’s so lovely to meet you,’’ she says. ‘’But are you okay?’’

‘’Of course, why wouldn’t I be?’’ He says stupidly.

She gestures to the bench, and then his face and throat.

‘’Ah,’’ he says, hand coming up to rub his neck. ‘’I know what it looks like, but I’m fine, honest.’’

She doesn’t look like she believes him for a second, and Finney can’t blame her. He knows what type of image she’s seeing, and he winces, picking up his backpack.

‘’Ma’am,’’ He starts, backing away. ‘’It’s been great meeting you, but I must go, I’ll be late for school otherwise.’’

‘’Finney!’’

He high tails it out of the park, not daring to look back.

He checks the time – he has ten minutes to get to school.

That was eventful. A problem for future Finney, he decides.

For now, he has to concentrate on the problem of, well, his looks. And how exactly he hides everything from Robin, Bruce, and Vance at lunch.

It’s going to be a long day.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, yeah, I know I said to ignore when I tell you guys what day I'm updating, but I promise I'm serious this time!! I'll be uploading the next chapter on Monday/Tuesday <33

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

He sees the moment Matty registers who he is, and Finney's fight or flight instincts take over, his legs carrying him away as fast as possible.

Matty shouts behind him, and he sprints around a corner, hoping to lose him in the crowd.

If he takes another beating, Finney thinks he may really die.

Chapter Notes

Hello hello!! Welcome to the sixth chapter, and I wish you all a lovely day/night ＜33

This one's big, so I do hope you're strapped in, it's quite the ride haha. In all seriousness, I'm unbelievably excited for you guys to read this, as we're reaching the main climax!! Honestly, I think there's only two or three more chapters before we're at the end, how weird is that omggg.

Let me know what your thoughts are on this chapter, I love hearing all your opinions :))

Trigger warnings: Mentions of child abuse, mentions of bullying/ violence, suicidal thoughts, and tell me if I've missed anything please!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

''Finney!''

He walks through the school gates, sighing in relief when he sees Gwen.

''Hi,'' he greets, embracing her. ''Everything okay?''

''Yeah, I'm fine,'' she says, and her brows furrow. ''Oh no, your neck! How are you going to hide the bruises?''

Finney shrugs helplessly. ''I don't know.''

Gwen's forehead pinches in thought, and she rummages around in

her bag for a moment. Finney watches her, perplexed, but suddenly she grins and hold something up like a trophy.

''Here, use this.''

There's a piece of black cloth in her hand, and Finney stares at it.

''Uh, how?'' He asks, raising an eyebrow.

She leans forward, tying the cloth around his throat like a sort of bandana – except on his neck.

''Thanks.'' Finney says, fiddling with the material.

She smiles, and then does a double take, gaze darting around.

''Where's Bruce?'' She asks, eyes narrowing.

Ah. He forgot about that

''He's… just running late. I think he said something about meeting up with Vance?'' He lies, praying she believes it.

Gwen's eyes widen. ''As in, Pinball Vance Hopper? That Vance?''

''…Yes?''

''Wow,'' she says, awe written across her features. ''Yeah okay, maybe it's a good thing you guys didn't walk together; you would've been terrified!''

Finney blinks. ''I'm sorry?''

Gwen smiles sheepishly. ''It's just, you're… well, *you*, whereas Vance is super intimidating and cool!''

Finney stares at her in disbelief, mouth hanging open.

''I'm cool! And I'll have you know, loads of people are scared of me, too.'' He argues, waving his hands about.

''Finney,'' She replies, and her tone sounds as though she's speaking to a small child. ''We had this conversation yesterday; you're a loser.''

''Vance has a pet bunny called Fluffy!'' He blurts, and then claps a palm over his lips.

Vance is going to *kill* him for revealing that.

She gapes at him. ''You're lying.''

''Nope.'' He shakes his head.

She grins manically – sometimes Finney genuinely fears her a little.

''Wow,'' she says again. ''Susie's going to love this.''

Gwen goes to turn away, but Finney catches her arm quickly.

''I need to ask you something,'' He begins, and continues at her nod. ''I'm sorry to bring this up, but, um, why was dad so upset?''

She frowns at the ground. ''He was irritable already, and I just – I accidently slammed one of the cupboard doors really loudly.''

He feels dizzy with anger, and clenches his fists, nails cutting into his skin.

''Right. Thanks for telling me.'' He says, through gritted teeth.

''I'll meet you at the gates later.'' Gwen mumbles, moving away.

Finney starts the walk to his first class, seething quietly. She got beaten for shutting a cupboard 'too nosily', and isn't that just unbelievably ridiculous?

Gwen is smart, and beautiful, and kind. She loves with all her heart and protects Finney as best she can. She's the best little sister he can ever ask for, and Finney can't imagine how their father can stand to treat her the way he does.

He sometimes wonders if their dad even has a heart at all, and with every fight, the theory becomes slightly more believable.

As soon as he turns eighteen, he's taking Gwen far away, and never looking back. Their dad can drink himself to death, for all he cares.

Finney's so deep in his thoughts, that he doesn't notice the body in front of him, and smacks into a solid back.

In what seems like slow motion, Finney watches as the persons phone falls out of their hands and hits the floor with a *smash!*

Finney looks at the person, an apology on the tip of his tongue, and

stops.

Because it's Matty he's just bumped into, and it's Matty's phone he's just probably broken.

He sees the moment Matty registers who he is, and Finney's fight or flight instincts take over, his legs carrying him away as fast as possible.

Matty shouts behind him, and he sprints around a corner, hoping to lose him in the crowd.

If he takes another beating, Finney thinks he may really die.

With a glance over his shoulder, he confirms that yes, Matty is chasing him, expression scrunched up with fury.

The boy's bathroom comes into view, and Finney ducks into it, locking the stall at the end, and jumping onto the toilet seat.

It's a stupid idea to corner himself like this, but he can't keep running – his body is burning too much.

He heaves a few large breaths, and when he hears the bathroom door open, he puts a hand over his mouth to muffle any noise.

''Come out, Blake. I know you're in here.''

Matty's pushing the stall doors open one by one, and Finney internally groans.

Matty is at least five inches taller than him, and he has big, burly arms that punch like being run over by a bus. He's quite wide set, too, so Finney can't even attempt to tackle him like he did with his dad.

In other words, Finney is completely, truly, utterly, screwed.

Matty has reached his stall now, and he pounds on the door, hard.

''Blake! Get out here, now. Don't make me fucking wait.''

Finney groans out loud this time.

''Look, can we please not do this? I'll pay for your phone, if you want.'' He tries, praying that Matty's in a good mood.

A huge knock on the door makes Finney jump, his ribs jolting

uncomfortably.

''I swear to fucking God if you don't get out here right now, Blake, I'll break your fucking legs.'' Matty hisses, hitting the stall again.

Finney's heart lurches, and his hand hovers over the lock, two seconds away from sliding it loose.

Bang!

The bathroom door bursts open, and Finney's hand falters.

''No way in hell I'm sitting through her lesson today– ''

Robin, he thinks. *Of all the people to walk in right now…*

''What are you doing?'' That's Bruce, and it takes a beat for Finney to realise he's talking to Matty.

''None of your business.'' Matty retorts, and Finney winces – not the smartest response, there.

Someone stalks forward, and Finney hears a slight squeak from Matty as the other person seems to grab him roughly.

''Speak to him like that again, I fucking dare you.'' Vance growls, and for gods' sake, of course all three of them just happen to be in this particular bathroom.

''Sorry.'' Matty replies, his tone filled with terror – not even he would mess with Vance Hopper.

The bell signalling the start of class rings from the distance, and Finney realises that the three boys are ditching.

''Get out.'' Vance says, and Matty shuffles immediately over to the door, however he pauses before he leaves.

''This isn't over, Blake!'' He calls, and then scampers away.

Great. Now they know he's here.

''Finn?''

Yep, there it is.

He resigns himself to his unfortunate fate, and steps out of the stall.

‘’Hi, guys.’’ He gives them a sheepish smile.

Vance is staring at him with a ridiculous smirk on his face, and Finney rolls his eyes. Yeah, okay, he knows he looks pathetic, no need to rub it in.

‘’Are those new bruises?’’

Finney turns to Robin’s voice, and startles when he comes face to face with him. Robin’s eyes flick over his face urgently, and he scowls, nodding over his shoulder.

‘’Was it that dipshit?’’

Finney isn’t listening, feeling stupidly breathless. Robin is much too close, and his heart pounds, heat rising through him.

He looks… well, there aren’t really any words that accurately describe how Robin looks. Ethereal, maybe. Angelic.

His dark hair falls in slight waves, and Finney knows that if he were to run his fingers through it, it would be so, so soft. It’s shiny, too, and he wonders if Robin uses product on it. The thought of Robin taking care of his hair makes him smile.

Robin’s tan skin is flawless, and Finney’s a mixture of in awe and jealous of how clear it is, teenage acne nowhere in sight.

His lips are pink and plump, and Finney can’t stop imagining about how it would feel to kiss them. Heavenly, he decides.

And, oh, Robin’s *eyes.* They’re as dark as space, and Finney doesn’t think he’ll ever get tired of gazing upon the stars that are his eyes.

‘’Finn?’’

He’s pulled out of his thoughts unpleasantly by the sound of someone snapping in front of his face, and he jerks away from Robin.

They’re all observing him with poorly concealed worry, or, in Vance’s case, boredom, and Finney chuckles awkwardly.

‘’Sorry, I completely missed what you were saying.’’

‘’What did Matty want?’’ Bruce asks, raising an eyebrow.

Finney shakes his head. ‘’Nothing important.’’

Someone's phone rings with the sound of a text, and Vance steps away a bit, reading the message.

''How come you're skipping?'' Finney inquires, trying to move on from Matty.

Bruce looks at him like he knows what Finney's doing but indulges him anyway, shrugging.

''Just felt like it, I suppose. I don't do it that often, but it's fun, sometimes.''

Finney's about to say something else, but for some reason his gaze is drawn to Vance, and he shuts his mouth.

Vance is looking at him with something akin to horror, and Finney's taken aback, a little scared by it. He thinks that's the most emotion other than anger he's ever seen on Vance's face.

They stare at each other, and Finney watches as Vance glances down to the black cloth around his neck.

He knows. Vance knows. How does he know?

Finney swallows tightly. There's a pit in his stomach, and dread fills it quickly.

His mom, he grasps abruptly. *His mom texted him.*

''No, Vance, no.'' He pleads, but it's too late.

Vance strides forward, and before Finney can dodge, he rips the bandana off his throat.

Finney goes still, terrified.

Bruce inhales sharply, the first to react. Finney keeps his eyes on the ground.

A warm hand cups Finney's chin, nudging his face to the side.

''What,'' Robin says, his tone scarily monotone. ''Is that?''

Finney refuses to speak, panic clawing at him like a wild cat.

''Oh my God.'' Bruce mumbles, and he sounds miserable.

''My mom says that she found him sleeping on a park bench, this morning.'' Vance tells them, and Finney can feel his hands begin to tremble.

''Finn,'' And now Robin's tone is desperate. ''Who did this to you?''

''Don't,'' Finney gasps finally. ''Don't do that.''

He's on the verge of crying, and suddenly he's so, so angry.

''You don't get to do that,'' He continues. ''You don't get to *care*.''

Robin's palms are on his cheeks now, and he connects their eyes.

''Someone hurt you,'' Robin states. ''Please, tell me who it was.''

Finney laughs hysterically, and tears rush down his face.

''You hurt me. *You*, Robin.'' Finney spits, and he breaks his face away from Robin's hands.

''Finn, your throat, please.'' Robin begs, and Finney can't remember the last time he heard Robin so upset.

Good, he thinks. *Let him hurt the way I do.*

Finney shakes his head fiercely. ''No! No, you're not allowed to just, walk out of my life, and then come prancing back in, pretending to care.''

Robin makes a hurt noise. ''I do care, Finn, I do.''

''Stop lying to me!'' Finney shouts, and his heart cracks painfully.

''Please, tell me who did it.'' Robin asks again, and Finney glares at him.

''When I was dying,'' Finney cries, stumbling away. ''When he was killing me, *you* were the last thing I thought of.''

''*Finn.*'' Robin breathes, looking as though someone's just punched him.

''Go fuck yourself, Robin.'' Finney snarls, and he turns, throwing himself out of the bathroom, and running as fast as he can.

He races all the way out of the building, and past the school gates.

He doesn’t stop until he ends up in front of his house, and he staggers in, thankful his dad is at work.

He forces himself upstairs, and collapses on his bed, tossing his bag on the floor.

He buries his face into his pillow, and he wails, his entire body shaking violently.

‘’It’s not fair! It’s not fair, please, it’s not fair.’’ Finney weeps, and he curls up into a ball, sobs wracking through him.

He doesn’t stop for a very long time, and, when at last, exhaustion hits him, and he closes his eyes, he can’t help thinking that he won’t mind so much if he never wakes up again.

Chapter End Notes

Again, I've got a few super busy days ahead of me, so the next chapter should be uploaded Thursday/Friday!!

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Across the road, Bruce and Vance stand, talking to someone.

Finney narrows his eyes, watching them. He can't quite see who it is they're talking to, but he can tell it isn't he-who-must-not-be-named.

He keeps going, curiosity biting at him.

The person is short, and Finney can see long brown plaits hanging down, and –

No way.

Finney blinks. That's his sister. That's… they're talking to Gwen.

Chapter Notes

Hiii!! Don't worry, I didn't forget to upload this!! On the last chapter I said either Thursday or Friday, and it's Friday, albeit quite late, but it still counts!!

Welcome, all, to the seventh chapter :)) This one doesn't have a lot happening, I apologise for leaving you on a cliff hanger, but unfortunately it had to be done!

I think it's very possible that the next chapter is the last one, and I can't tell you how excited I am to write it!! In the meantime, I hope you all enjoy this one :))

Trigger warnings: Implied child abuse, and I think that's all for this chapter, but let me know if I've missed something!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When he finally awakens, Finney doesn't know what to do with himself.

He sits on his bed, tears run completely dry.

Finney is numb, and even if he wanted to, he can't bring himself to be angry, or sad. He simply sits, and stares at the wall.

There are no other schools in the area, so it's not like he can convince his dad to transfer him. He can't drop out, either.

He's stuck, and he feels very much like just… giving up.

Finney doesn't want to go back and have to avoid the three boys for the rest of the year. He doesn't think it would work anyway, seeing as they always somehow find a way to bump into him.

Finney jumps when he hears a clatter from downstairs. His dad is back, then. That means school is over, too.

Robin won't come over, will he?

He knows where Finney lives, of course, but he won't come knocking on his door, right? Finney hopes so, anyway.

Finney's been thinking a lot since he woke up, and he's more confused than ever.

What, exactly, is Robin's deal?

Finney's been replaying the whole interaction from earlier over and over, and he's got more questions now than ever.

Does Robin care about him or not?

Finney can't tell if Robin was being serious when he saw the bruises, and it's frustrating him to no end.

On one hand, Robin is a cruel, mean person, who apparently doesn't care for any type of communication, and instead chooses to ignore people for no reason at all.

But, on the other hand, Robin saw his throat, and *seemed* to care about it. He wanted to know who had hurt Finney, and he'd looked more upset than Finney had ever seen.

What does this all mean? Is the only thing that's been running through Finney's head since the incident, and he's nowhere near close to figuring it out.

He doesn't want to talk to Robin again, though. In fact, he doesn't want to even see the other boy.

Finney has reached his limit, and no matter how much he wants actual answers, he's not going to try and get them.

He is done with Robin. He wants nothing to do with him.

And so, he sits, and he stares, and he wonders; *what now?*

Because what is the point of Finney's life, if not to love Robin Arellano?

Well, okay, he's not just going to stop loving Robin – that would be an impossible task. Finney is, nevertheless, going to try and stop thinking about him.

Which he was achieving, before, of course, Robin found him in the bathroom, and crashed into his life for the second time.

No, before that, Finney hadn't thought about the boy in a long time, and he intends to accomplish that once again.

Unfortunately, it's proving to be easier said than done.

Since he's woken up, his brain has been full of Robin. He can't recall one thing he's thought of that wasn't something to do with Robin.

Hm. Maybe being in his room doing nothing isn't helping. Going on a walk might help clear his mind.

Finney stands up, and goes to open his bedroom door, but stops, fingers hovering over the handle.

He forgot – his dad is home.

Finney doesn't particularly feel like testing the waters with his dad quite yet, and so, he turns back around, and slides open his window.

He's never snuck out of here before, but surely it can't be that difficult – right? His room is on the second floor, yes, but the little overhang of the front roof is below his window, and he should be able to climb down.

Finney's never been known for his gracefulness, however, and he pushes himself out of the window very slowly, carefully placing his feet on the tiles.

He hopes no one spots him up here; that would be very awkward to try and explain. The drop down isn't too far, and he bends into a sort of crouch, grateful that it hasn't rained recently, and that the surfaces are dry.

He shuts the window as best he can – there's no way he'll be able to get back up here and sneak in.

Right. Now the hard part.

He shuffles along the roof, all the way until he reaches the edge. It's not that high up, and he dangles his feet off into the abyss.

There's a ledge, just above the living room window, that he decides is his way down.

He grasps the tiles and turns his body so that his stomach faces inwards. He's having to do this blind, but he places his feet in every direction until he finally feels the solid ledge.

Cautiously, he puts his full weight onto it, sighing in relief when he doesn't immediately go tumbling down.

Now, all he has to do is make the jump to the ground, and so he braces himself, and pushes off.

He hits the floor standing, and although his knees hurt from the impact, he's okay.

Finney's starting to wonder if the winter is ever going to arrive, because it's a sunny day again, and the air is warm. Not that he's complaining, of course, the more warmth the better.

He strolls along the path, letting the cool breeze wash over his face.

The streets are rather quiet, the only noise the distant laughter of school kids going home.

He prays the school doesn't call his dad to tell him Finney missed school. It's only one day, and it's not like Finney skips school on a regular basis. They might say something to him tomorrow about it, but he doesn't think they'll call home.

He abruptly realises that he's been unconsciously walking in the direction of school, and just as he's about to go the other way, he stops.

Across the road, Bruce and Vance stand, talking to someone.

Finney narrows his eyes, watching them. He can't quite see who it is they're talking to, but he can tell it isn't he-who-must-not-be-

named.

He keeps going, curiosity biting at him.

The person is short, and Finney can see long brown plaits hanging down, and –

No way.

Finney blinks. That's his sister. That's… they're talking to *Gwen.*

He can't help it – he crosses the street quickly, heading straight for them.

''Gwen!'' He barks, and they all start, whirling round.

''Finney!'' Gwen exclaims, and she rushes forward, wrapping her arms around him tightly.

Finney hugs back for a moment, and then grabs her shoulders, looking at her.

''What are you doing?'' He arches an eyebrow.

She glares at him. ''What do you *think* I'm doing, huh? Trying to figure out where you were, that's what! You were meant to meet me at the school gates.''

Finney groans, throwing his head back. ''God, yes, I'm so sorry. I completely forgot.''

''Clearly.'' Gwen grumbles, her hands resting on her hips.

''I am really sorry; I wasn't thinking straight this morning and it just went over my head.'' He apologizes, giving her his best kicked puppy impression.

Gwen rolls her eyes, and the anger in them worsens.

''And what's this I'm hearing from Bruce, hm? You told me you stayed at his place last night, but now he's saying you didn't, and that you actually slept on a park bench! You wanna explain that?''

Finney shoots Bruce a dirty look, but the boy just shrugs, not seeming sorry at all.

''I want to hear this explanation, too.'' Bruce says, and Finney

sighs.

''Look, okay. I… I was stuck. I didn't have anyone to call, or go to, or anything. And! It wasn't that bad, you know. The bench was decently comfortable.'' He smiles hopefully at them, spreading his hands in a gesture of *what can you do?*

He's met with faces of disbelief, and Vance scoffs.

''Fucking hell, you're stupid.'' Vance mutters, and Finney scowls at him.

''Excuse me?''

''You're stupid.'' Vance says louder, and Finney's frown deepens.

''Oh yeah? How, exactly?''

Vance raises an eyebrow. ''There are loads of people you could've called.''

Finney laughs without humour. ''Right, and I suppose you're one of those people?''

Vance's face does a funny thing, and he sort of scrunches his mouth up. He looks as though he's making a hard decision about something.

''I would have let you stay over.'' Bruce says suddenly, and Finney gawks at him.

Bruce's expression is sincere, and no matter how much he looks, Finney can't find a trace of a lie.

''I don't have your number.'' Is the only thing Finney can answer with, a little astonished that Bruce is so genuine.

''You have Robin's number.''

Finney stares, and Bruce swallows, looking like he regrets opening his mouth.

''I don't want to speak about him.'' Finney snaps harshly, and out of the corner of his eye, he can see Gwen watching him closely.

''Finney,'' Bruce pleads. ''You have to talk to him.''

Finney shakes his head furiously. ''No, absolutely not. I'm done

with him, and I'm done with you guys, too.''

Bruce's expression falls. ''Don't do that. I swear to you Finney, there's a reason for what he did. Please talk to him.''

''No, *you* don't do that,'' Finney growls. ''Stop shoving your nose where it doesn't belong, Yamada.''

Vance takes a menacing step forward, his fists already clenched, but Bruce puts an arm out, stopping him.

''Vance and I are gonna go, okay? I'm sorry for butting in, but please, at least think about what I said?''

Finney just looks away, ignoring them as they walk past. He waits until he's sure they're gone before he turns to Gwen.

''Let's go.'' He says, and they begin the journey home.

He can feel Gwen's eyes on him, and he snaps his head to her.

''What?''

Her mouth is a thin line of disapproval, and Finney sneers at her.

''Oh, what now? Are you gonna get mad because I've been talking to Robin? What, because 'the people you love leave you', huh?''

''Don't be ridiculous Finney, that's not what I was going to say.'' She replies, rolling her eyes.

''Well, what were you going to say, then? Come on, let's hear it.'' He can feel himself getting angrier, and he desperately tries to reel it in. The last thing he needs is to have an argument with Gwen.

''I think you should talk to him.''

Finney's jaw drops, and he blinks dumbly.

''What?''

''Have a conversation with him.'' Gwen says again, and Finney tips his face up to the sky.

''Not you, too. Seriously? You know what he did to me.''

Gwen's expression is thoughtful. ''It sounds to me like he still cares

about you.''

''And, what, because deep down he's affectionate towards me, that excuses what happened three years ago?'' Finney's starting to think everyone is on Robin's side, and it's not a nice feeling.

Gwen stops walking, gazing at him properly.

''No,'' she says. ''No, it doesn't excuse it. But I think you'll really regret not clearing things up, and I'm not stupid, Finney. I know you still love him, and I know how badly it's hurting you. And I know you won't be able to ever get over this if you don't get answers. Speak to him, now.''

Finney is torn, and his heart burns painfully. Gwen is right, of course, and he doesn't know how to feel about it.

''I should go right now?''

She takes his hand in her own, squeezing it firmly. ''Yeah. Right now.''

''I don't know.'' He murmurs, and this decision is important, he knows it is. Whatever he chooses will change everything.

''You love him, yes?'' She asks, and Finney is struck with a sense of déjà vu.

And, like all those years ago, he hangs his head, and whispers: ''I do.''

''Then go.'' Gwen tells him, and she pushes him gently.

He hesitates, still. ''I can't leave you alone with dad.''

She smiles. ''Okay, Finney. I'll go to Susie's.''

''Yeah?''

She nods. ''Yeah.''

Gwen turns away from the direction of their house, and she gives him a determined look, making a *go on* motion.

Finney laughs breathlessly, and he can't help but run towards Robin's place, heart pounding.

He reaches it in no time, and steps up to the front door, knocking quickly.

He moves away a little, and suddenly feels awful.

Maybe he shouldn't do this. If he thinks about it, it's actually a terrible idea, and he can't imagine how Gwen managed to convince him otherwise.

He needs to leave, now. He can't do this, what on earth is he thinking?

God, should his ears be ringing this loudly? And, oh, his stomach is going to fall out, is that normal? Is he dying? What's happening, please, he's panicking, and this is silly, and foolish, and –

''Finn?''

Chapter End Notes

The next chapter should be up on Monday/Tuesday!!

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Someone is humming, Finney realises suddenly. It's a tune he doesn't recognise, but the sound is hushed and calming to his ringing ears.

He exhales heavily, and desperately focuses on the noise. It's coming from somewhere above him, and he breathes with the rise and fall of the melody.

He returns gradually to his senses, and his body aches with the strain of the previous panic. He's forced himself into a tight ball, and he stretches his limbs cautiously.

His eyelids feel like they've been screwed shut and opening them is a slow process. When he manages it, he cringes, blinking quickly – the intrusion of light blinds him.

Finney sits up, finally able to pinpoint the humming; it's Robin, of course.

Chapter Notes

Welcome, welcome!! I'm so excited for you guys to read this one, omfg!!

Okay, so, I know I said this chapter would probably be the last, but I've actually decided there's gonna be one more. This chapter kinda seems like it could be the end, but I don't think I'm quite happy with this yet, and I wanna add more genuine finney/robin, otherwise this isn't really a romance story, is it?

So yeah, there are still a couple of loose ends to tie up, but until then, I hope you all enjoy this chapter!!

Trigger warnings: mentions of death, mentions of child abuse, panic attacks, and tell me if I've missed anything!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Oh my god, oh my god, what do I do, oh my god, someone help me, please.

Finney's speechless, and he stands there, staring dumbly.

Because what is he meant to say? Now that's he's actually here, all coherent thoughts and words have disappeared from his brain, and he doesn't know what to do.

''Finn? Are you okay?''

Finney's mouth opens and closes like a goldfish, and Robin's eyes crinkle with concern.

''Is something wrong? Are you hurt?'' Robin asks, stepping closer.

A small part of Finney melts at the worry in Robin's voice, but he forces himself to stand tall, and shakes his head.

''No, no, I'm okay. I'm here to talk. To you. About something….'' He trails off, wishing he didn't come here. Damn Gwen for talking him into it.

Robin blinks at him, his eyebrows furrowing. ''Okay…? Do you want to come in?''

Finney just nods, knowing if he starts speaking again, he'll make more of a fool of himself than he already has.

Robin closes the door behind them, and Finney follows him up the stairs, to his bedroom.

He can feel himself shaking with nerves, and he wonders what the consequences of turning around and booking it out of the house are – he really regrets coming here.

Robin walks into the room, while Finney lingers in the doorway awkwardly.

He doesn't know how to start, and he looks everywhere but Robin, fiddling with the sleeves of his shirt.

''So, um, what did you want to talk about?''

The tone of Robin's voice makes Finney snap his gaze over, and he observes in muted shock as Robin's eyes go wild and vulnerable with fear.

He's scared, Finney thinks. *Of me?*

And isn't that a strange idea – the strong cowering before the weak? Laughable, really, but as Finney studies Robin's expression, he knows

it to be true.

So, in a burst of confidence, he rolls his shoulders back, and asks: ‘’Why do you hate me?’’

Robin clearly isn’t expecting that question, because his jaw drops, and the fear is replaced with confusion.

‘’*What*?’’

Finney glares. ‘’No, no, don’t do that. Don’t act like it isn’t true – don’t pretend.’’

‘’But it’s not true!’’ Robin exclaims, frowning slightly.

Finney takes a step forward, barely noticing the way Robin flinches back. ‘’Oh yeah? What happened three years ago, then? Or did I just imagine you cutting me off completely?’’

Robin gulps visibly. ‘’Finn– ‘’

Finney can’t stop now, resentment swallowing him whole. ‘’Did I just make up the way you abandoned me? Huh? Cause that’s what you did – you left me! With no explanation!’’

‘’Finn, wait– ‘’

‘’You were my only friend – my best friend! And I was so confused, I thought I’d done something wrong, but it turns out you’re just a cruel, horrible person, and you broke my heart!’’

‘’Please, Finn– ‘’

Finney can feel tears spilling onto his cheeks. ‘’I hate you, Robin. I hate you, and I hate your stupid friends, and I hate you, I hate you, I hate– ‘’

‘’Finney!’’

His chest heaves up and down, and salty teardrops splash into his mouth, over and over. He feels a bit like collapsing, and he stares at Robin in disbelief.

Robin is crying, too. Finney watches as the boy’s pupils glisten unnaturally, and his pretty lips tremble.

Robin falls onto the bed behind him, and his eyes hold Finney

captive.

''Finney,'' Robin says. ''I'm gay.''

Finney's almost too caught up on the use of his full name, to take in the second part. He stares at Robin, his brain static.

''I – what?''

''I'm gay,'' Robin repeats. ''I like boys.''

His knees give out beneath him, and Finney slides to the floor, the soft carpet engulfing him.

''I don't understand.'' He whimpers, rocking his body back and forth.

''*Mi amor*,'' Robin says, and heat rises within Finney. ''I like *you*.''

Finney's dreaming. He's hallucinating. This isn't real, it's not. No way. Someone's playing a mean trick on him, and he can't *breathe*.

His head is underwater, and his dad is strangling him again, and he can't breathe, he can't breathe, please.

Finney gasps, his body shuddering. He curls in on himself, fingers pulling at his hair.

Someone is talking, saying his name, pleading from far away, but Finney pays no attention, nails scraping along his scalp uncomfortably.

He misheard. He misheard, and Robin is being unkind. Robin is being vicious, and Finney didn't hear him properly.

Kill me, He begs. *Someone, please, I can't, I can't – kill me, please.*

He's sobbing, and choking, and his ribs are restricting, closing in on themselves.

Finney feels warm arms wrap around him, and he cries out, because *it's his dad, his dad is trying to hurt him again, no, please, go away.*

The hands leave, and he inhales deeply, trying to get air into his lungs.

Someone is humming, Finney realises suddenly. It's a tune he

doesn't recognise, but the sound is hushed and calming to his ringing ears.

He exhales heavily, and desperately focuses on the noise. It's coming from somewhere above him, and he breathes with the rise and fall of the melody.

He returns gradually to his senses, and his body aches with the strain of the previous panic. He's forced himself into a tight ball, and he stretches his limbs cautiously.

His eyelids feel like they've been screwed shut and opening them is a slow process. When he manages it, he cringes, blinking quickly – the intrusion of light blinds him.

Finney sits up, finally able to pinpoint the humming; it's Robin, of course.

Robin, who is crouched beside him, gentle notes coming from his throat. They make eye contact, and Robin smiles, relieved.

''There you are, *mi amor,*'' Robin whispers. ''Feel better?''

Finney blinks drowsily, stuck on the way Robin's voice goes low and heated when he speaks Spanish.

Careful fingers begin brushing Finney's curls back from his face, and he leans into the touch, sighing a little.

It takes Finney an embarrassingly long time to remember the circumstances of this whole thing, and when it clicks, he straightens, pulling away from Robin.

''I still don't understand.'' His voice is hoarse and tired, as though he's been screaming. He wonders if he has – he won't be surprised.

Robin tilts his head to the side, looking pained. ''It's difficult to explain.''

''Try.'' Finney demands.

Robin nods, biting his bottom lip. ''Yes, okay, I suppose I owe it to you. It goes like this: once upon a time, I had a best friend. A best friend who I would have done anything for, and who I cared for with all my heart. We grew up together, you see, and my best friend wasn't so good at standing up for himself, so of course, I had to protect him.

Well, I guess one day, I realised my feelings towards him weren't normal friendship feelings, and back then, I thought it was wrong. I thought it was strange, and weird, and not allowed. So, I pushed my best friend away, because I wanted to get rid of those feelings.''

Finney swallows tightly. ''And did it work?''

Robin's shoulders slump, and he looks like he might cry again. ''No.''

Finney doesn't know what he expected, but it certainly wasn't *that*.

''Why did you think it was wrong?'' Finney asks curiously.

Robin shrugs. ''I don't know. I just hadn't ever thought about it before, I guess.''

''Do you still think it's wrong?'' Finney really hopes he doesn't.

''It's… hard,'' Robin says, staring at the carpet. ''Realistically, I know it's okay, but it's hard, sometimes.''

''I'm sorry.'' Finney mumbles.

Robin shakes his head, lips quirking. ''Don't apologise. It's not your fault my brain's messed up.''

''There's nothing messed up about you.'' Finney scowls.

''Finn,'' Robin snorts. ''I ruined our friendship because I have a crush on you. I think that's a bit messed up.''

''Have?''

Robin arches his eyebrows. ''Didn't you hear me earlier? I like you, Finn.''

''Oh.'' Yes, it's all coming back to him, now.

''*Oh*,'' Robin echoes, smirking. ''So forgetful.''

Finney wets his lips. ''I like you, too.''

Robin gazes at him in awe. ''You do?''

''*I love you*.'' Finney breathes, only just loud enough for Robin to hear.

''Love?'' Robin squeaks, and Finney has to stop himself from giggling.

He smiles shyly. ''Always have.''

Robin's speechless, a light flush dusting his cheeks.

Finney can't help a small snicker from escaping. God, isn't this just a dream? What on earth stopped him from telling Robin before–

Finney feels cold, all of a sudden.

None of this is fair. Just for a moment, he thought – well, he doesn't know what he thought.

He forgot, though. He forgot why he's actually here.

Robin seems to sense his thoughts, because his smiles fades, and he gives Finney a sad look.

''I know it's pointless, but I'm sorry.''

Finney doesn't know how to reply.

He should be furious. He knows he should be yelling at Robin, shouting that he'll never forgive him.

Finney just feels miserable.

Unconsciously, his palm comes to rest on his neck.

''Finn,'' Robin says, sounding strained. ''I know I have no right to be intruding, but please, what happened?''

Even when they were friends, Finney never told Robin about his dad. He was always too scared of what would happen.

He's not so scared, anymore. Not after last night.

''My dad happened.'' Finney tells Robin, and it's like a weight has been lifted off him forever.

''*Cariño,''* Robin murmurs, eyes wide and worried. ''How long has this been going on?''

''Since my mom died.'' Finney replies, trying not to get distracted by the way his insides go fuzzy when Robin speaks Spanish.

Robin stares. ‘’Your mom died when you were little. When we were friends.’’

Finney winces slightly. ‘’Trust me, I didn’t enjoy keeping it from you.’’

Robin glowers. ‘’I’ll *kill* him.’’

‘’Robin– ‘’

Finney jolts when Robin’s hands clasp his own.

‘’Finn, I swear, I won’t let him harm you again, you hear? Never again.’’ Robin promises, face lined with sincerity.

(”I swear, I won’t ever harm you again. I promise.”)

Finney doesn’t argue, squeezing Robin’s palms.

Robin looks like he wants to say something else, get mad at Finney for not telling him, perhaps, but he stops, and sighs.

‘’I suppose I can’t talk much, can I? I did the exact same thing.’’ Robin chuckles, though his expression is void of amusement.

Finney smiles, looking down. There’s a moment of silence, and he feels lost. He came here with a clear plan in mind – find out what happened three years ago – and he’s done that, he’s gotten answers.

The question is, how does he act on those answers?

Because Robin just confessed that he likes Finney, and isn’t that everything he’s ever wanted?

He’s not quite so sure, anymore.

‘’What now?’’ Finney has to ask. He’s never been good at making decisions himself.

‘’It’s your choice, Finn.’’ Robin says softly.

Panic grips him abruptly. Choices are tricky things.

‘’I think,’’ he says. ‘’I need time.’’

Robin doesn’t seem surprised. ‘’Of course, Finn, take all the time you need.’’

Finney regards him for a second, and once he deems Robin genuine, he stands up.

Robin grins in reassurance, and the pair make their way downstairs, to the front door.

Finney stands on the porch, watching Robin.

''I'll see you soon?''

Robin's eyes sparkle. ''Any time you want, Finn.''

Finney smiles, all his teeth on show. He waves, laughing when Robin salutes him in return.

He starts to move away but stops at the sound of Robin's voice.

''Oh, and Finn? Call me if your dad tries anything – I'll make sure he never touches you again.''

Finney nods in reply, and walks away, feeling lighter than he has in months.

Chapter End Notes

Unfortunately, I have a very busy week ahead of me again, so the next update should hopefully be Friday/Saturday :))

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

> ‘’Dad,’’ Finney pleads anyway. ‘’You don’t want to do this.’’
> Terrence grins manically, and Finney flinches at the sight. It looks wrong on his dad’s lips – scrunched up in a way that looks like it hurts.
> He places a foot over Finney’s chest, pressing down just enough that Finney’s lungs constrict, panic lacing through him.
> Finney sort of wishes he’ll just get it over and done with. No need to drag it out, that’ll be cruel.

Chapter Notes

> Oh my god, I know this is dangerously close to being late, but it counts!! I made it!
>
> I lied again, there's going to be another part after this. I've just been going with the flow of the story, and I think 10 chapters is a nice place to end on, so until then, enjoy this chap <33
>
> Trigger warnings: graphic child abuse, mentions/thoughts of death, mentions of alcohol/alcoholism, mentions of suicide, and tell me if I missed anything please!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

In hindsight, Finney should have known better.

He was too high off the excitement of the conversation with Robin. He wasn’t thinking straight.

A fatal mistake on his part, clearly.

Because now he’s a step inside his house, and his dad’s hand is wrapped around his throat for a second time.

It was stupid to think his dad will have calmed down. Terrence Blake doesn’t *do* calm; he’s an angry, spiteful being, with more hatred for himself than he knows what to do with.

Well. That’s a lie, actually. He fuels it, lets it control him, and then takes it out on his own children.

Coward, Finney doesn't say, breath coming in short gasps. *Goddamn coward.*

There's a moment, where they look into each other's eyes, silence hanging in the air. Finney doesn't know what exactly his dad sees, but his expression becomes impossibly madder, and he throws Finney against the wall.

His dad slams the front door shut, and Finney blinks up at him, doubled over in pain.

''You,'' The man spits, crooked finger pointing accusingly. ''Are dead, boy.''

Finney doubts there's even any point in fighting. As made obvious from previous instances, he stands no chance.

He doesn't think it will take much, he's half dead as it is. A decent hit to the head, maybe, and he'll be down.

Distantly, he registers that his dad is drunk. Does that help Finney? He can't be sure, alcohol doesn't faze his dad in the normal ways; he's never unbalanced, extra strength in each fist than when he's sober.

Which is just Finney's luck, of course.

His dad approaches fast, and Finney attempts to roll out of the way, realising too late that it's a terrible idea – his ribs give out in the middle of the movement, and he flops onto the floor pitifully.

His dad *laughs* at him, and for some reason that shocks Finney more than anything else his dad has done so far.

''You're pathetic, boy.'' The man tuts scornfully, and Finney stares, wondering what the hell his dad's been drinking.

This behaviour is weird, even for his dad. Perhaps he's truly lost it, incapable of seeing reason.

''Dad,'' Finney pleads anyway. ''You don't want to do this.''

Terrence grins manically, and Finney flinches at the sight. It looks wrong on his dad's lips – scrunched up in a way that looks like it hurts.

He places a foot over Finney's chest, pressing down just enough that Finney's lungs constrict, panic lacing through him.

Finney sort of wishes he'll just get it over and done with. No need to drag it out, that'll be cruel.

His dad is merciless, however, and he pushes down deliberately, as Finney scrabbles helplessly, battered body refusing to cooperate properly.

He's endlessly grateful he told Gwen to go to Susie's. He can't imagine how this would go with her here, and he's glad he never has to find out.

Finney exhales shakily, tears gathering in the corner of his eyes.

It's almost poetic, really. 'Finney Blake, murdered by his own father.' He can practically hear the mutters: ''*You mean that loser kid? Yeah, I'm not surprised. I heard his mom committed suicide, and that his dad's an alcoholic; fucked up, the lot of them.*''

He can count on one hand the number of people who will care when he dies; Gwen, obviously, Robin (he feels giddy with that thought), Bruce, maybe? Vance, no way.

Ring, ring, ring.

Both Finney and his dad jump, whipping their heads to the side so fast it would be funny in any other circumstance.

The noise is slightly muffled, and Finney's eyes search, until they land upon his discarded backpack.

His phone. Someone's calling him.

This realisation doesn't fill him with much hope, considering the fact he still has to get to the phone, but it motivates him enough to launch upwards, throwing his weight against his dad's leg.

Somehow, it works, and his dad stumbles back, hands waving around.

Finney doesn't hesitate, and scrambles to his bag, digging through it quickly.

He swipes the answer option when he finally finds the device, not bothering to even check who it is.

''Hello?'' He says breathlessly.

‘’Hi, Finn.’’

It’s ridiculous, the way Finney immediately deflates in relief. The sound of Robin’s voice sends tingles down his spine, and he sighs a little, terror fading away.

The calm doesn’t last long, however, because before Finney can say anything else, something hard hits the side of his face, and he cries out.

He looks down to see an empty beer bottle, and God, the irony of it.

His dad using the very thing that’s killing him, to try and murder Finney.

Finney sets his gaze on his dad, slumping when he spies another bottle clasped in his hand.

‘’Finn? Hello?’’

Oh, right. Robin.

‘’Help,’’ He begs, crawling away from his dad frantically. ‘’Please, help me.’’

‘’What’s wrong? Are you hurt?’’

His dad smashes the glass against the wall, and Finney’s heart drops at the sight of the jagged spikes.

‘’He’s going to kill me, Robin.’’ Finney whispers hurriedly, and then forces himself to stand, making a break for the door.

He doesn’t get far, and he screams, phone falling out of his fingers, when rough arms close around him.

He thrashes, pulling against the powerful hold, but it’s no use. He’s dragged backwards, feet trailing along the floor.

He fights, scratching and biting, desperately trying to get his dad to release him, but all he accomplishes is exhausting himself of any energy he has.

All of a sudden, Finney stills.

Sharp points press into his throat, and Finney goes cold.

''Don't,'' He whimpers, though he knows it's futile. ''Please, dad.''

The makeshift blade slices deeper, and Finney feels a trickle of blood slide down his neck, falling beneath the collar of his shirt.

He doesn't dare move an inch, though he can feel his body vibrating with fear, hands tremoring where they lay clutched at the arm around him.

''I've wanted to do this for so fucking long.'' Terrence hisses, his alcohol tainted breath causing Finney to wrinkle his nose.

Finney refuses to reply, too focused on not letting the glass cut his throat open.

I'm not dying here, he decides. *Not today.*

A silly idea crosses his mind, and Finney wavers – does he take the risk?

Fuck it.

Finney lifts his leg, and stomps down, damaged trainer meeting his dad's socked foot.

Instantly, his dad shouts, and Finney grabs the bottle tightly, shoving it away from his neck.

His hand is torn apart in the process, but Finney doesn't let that stop him, bearing through the agony, and lurching forwards.

His dad glowers at him scarily, and he's guarding the front door, so Finney turns, running to the kitchen.

Finney slams into the counter, and opens the cutlery draw, picking the first knife he spots.

His dad arrives behind Finney, and he spins, holding the knife out menacingly.

''Come anywhere near me and I swear I'll do it.'' Finney threatens, and he's thankful his voice remains steady.

Terrence smirks, and Finney arches an eyebrow.

''What's so funny?'' He asks, jutting the knife outwards a little more.

''You won't do it,'' His dad says confidently. ''You're too weak.''

''I guess we'll find out.'' Finney responds, dutifully ignoring the clear disadvantage he's at.

He's holding the knife in his left hand – his nondominant one, because his right hand is rendered useless, blood spilling like a waterfall.

He really screwed himself over, grasping that glass bottle, but what was he to do? Let his dad slit his throat? Not a chance.

His dad obviously doesn't believe a word he says, and suddenly, he's directly in front of Finney.

The man twists Finney's wrist, and the knife falls to the ground with a loud *clang!*

Well. That didn't last long.

Finney doesn't admit defeat, and with his ruined right hand, he swings, catching his dad in the jaw.

It stings horribly, but the satisfaction of watching his dad groan, palm held to his face, makes it worth the discomfort.

Finney doesn't stop, knowing that if there's even a tiny pause, it'll all be over. He punches again, and again, red splattering everywhere.

Small victories don't win the war, however, and his dad must get fed up with Finney's feeble hits, because before Finney can blink, he finds his legs being swept away from beneath him, and he goes down.

Finney screeches, his entire body on fire. He won't be surprised if he ends up breaking a whole lot more than just a single rib.

He supposes that won't really matter, though, considering he's about to die.

The wind has been knocked out of him, and he lies, unmoving.

His dad crouches above him, and Finney's eyes widen when he notices the knife. Finney's knife, the one he dropped. His dad must have picked it up.

Yet again, a sharp blade is pressed to Finney's neck, and this time, he knows it's the end.

''Any last words?'' His dad inquires, lips quirking in morbid amusement.

''Go to hell.'' Finney murmurs aggressively, gazing dead into his dad's blown out pupils.

The seams of Finney's throat come gradually apart, and warm liquid leaks down, down, down–

His dad is ripped off Finney, and a glimpse of dark, brown hair, and a familiar bandana, is all he gets before two bodies clash together, out of sight.

Finney sits up, shock coursing through him.

''*Robin.''* Finney breathes, staring as a blur of tanned skin rains fist after fist into his dad's teeth.

Crimson becomes all Finney can see, and he winces as he hears the tell-tale sound of bones crunching wrongly.

All he can do is rest and observe, as Robin's knuckles pound into his dad's face, over and over.

Eventually, Finney decides this has gone on long enough, and he crawls forward. He can't allow Robin to *kill* his dad, for god's sake.

''Robin! Quit it, he's done!''

Robin doesn't stop, if anything, his hits become stronger, faster.

Finney reaches out, placing a soothing hand on Robin's shoulder.

''Okay, okay, that's it. You're finished, he's had enough.''

Robin's chest heaves, and he finally slows down, panting.

His knuckles are heavily wounded, and Finney winces, taking them in his own hands.

''God,'' He mutters, examining them. ''You idiot, you've destroyed them.''

Robin snatches them away, and Finney's eyebrows furrow, but before he can question anything, bloodied palms cup his cheeks gently.

‘’Finn, you’re hurt.’’ Robin states, and he’s woefully sad.

Finney tries for a smile, and gestures to the beaten body of his dad. ‘’You should see the other guy.’’

Robin glares. ‘’Don’t. Don’t joke right now.’’

‘’Sorry– ‘’

Finney’s cut off by Robin pulling him into a soft embrace, and he melts, slumping into the safe warmth.

‘’You’re okay?’’ Robin checks, holding him close.

‘’Yeah,’’ Finney replies, burying his face into the crook of Robin's neck. ‘’I am now.’’

Chapter End Notes

The next chapter should be out on Thursday/Friday :))

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

''What now?'' Finney asks, not able to keep the anxiety from his voice.

Robin turns to glance at him, and freezes. He seems to look at Finney like he's seeing him for the first time.

''Your throat, Finn,'' Robin says, horrified. ''How didn't I notice before?''

It's clearly a rhetorical question, but Finney replies anyway, shrugging.

''It's not that big of a deal.''

Robin glares threateningly. ''Don't play it down like some little scratch – you can't fool me, Finn.''

Chapter Notes

My god, this is bittersweet, huh?

Hi, welcome, everyone, to the last chapter of this little fic of mine!! Yeah, I'm aware this is super early, but I was really excited about this chapter, and somehow finished it really soon haha.

I think this was my fav chapter to write out of the whole thing, so I hope you all enjoy it!! I'll put my final thoughts and feelings at the end note, I don't wanna spoil anything haha.

Oh! And please let me know if any of the spanish is wrong - google translate is my source, which as we all know is not reliable in the slightest.

Trigger warnings: mentions of child abuse, mentions of injuries, and I think that's it!! Tell me if I missed something, though :))

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Finney's been sitting in Robin's arms for a while – too long, probably.

He can't help it; Robin is warm, and cosy, and he feels a bit like home.

Which is a strange thought, for Finney. He hasn't had a home since his mom passed, and during that time, the only thing that ever really came close was Robin, back before everything happened.

So, it's a weird thought, and the idea is daunting. The fact that they reconciled that very day, and somehow, Robin already feels like *safety*.

It's a stranger thought, still, to think that here Finney is, relaxed in Robin's hold, while he listens to the ragged breathing of his dad.

His dad, who looks half-dead, to be honest, lies a few feet away from the two boys, eyes heavily lidded, his chest rising and falling slowly, while it makes funny crackling noises.

Finney doesn't care at all, though, and he considers the concept of being a tad insane for not having an ounce of sympathy.

'*All the best people are crazy*', Finney remembers, and as he pulls away, gazing at the fierce protectiveness that is Robin Arellano, he thinks that, ridiculously, the quote can't possibly be more right.

''You're scary sometimes, you know that?'' Finney mumbles, settling back into Robin.

A huff of laughter escapes Robin's mouth, and he lifts his fingers, stroking carefully through Finney's silky curls.

''I do know that, actually. I have a reputation for a reason.''

Finney rolls his eyes, despite knowing Robin can't see him.

''You're such an asshole.'' He grumbles, snuggling closer.

''And yet,'' Robin replies, a touch smug. ''Here you are, in my lap.''

Finney turns pink, and he's grateful his face is hidden. Flirty Robin does terrible things to Finney's poor heart, and he giggles, thinking about how wildly inappropriate they're being for this situation.

''I'm much too calm right now. I feel as though I should be crying, not sitting here peacefully.'' Finney says, lips brushing the smooth skin of Robin's neck.

''It's the shock,'' Robin informs him. ''I don't think it's quite hit you yet. You'll probably start bawling and screaming randomly, later.''

Finney looks up at Robin, raising his eyebrows. ''Has anyone ever

told you how unbelievably reassuring you are?''

Robin does his stupid smirk thing. ''Yes. Many times.''

Finney rolls his eyes again, forcing himself to straighten up properly.

''I suppose,'' He starts, looking regretful. ''We should address the elephant in the room.''

Robin's expression turns angry. ''Sure, my knuckles have had enough rest, I think.''

Finney shakes his head. ''You're not killing him, Robin.''

''*The things I would give*,'' Robin mutters under his breath, and then he sighs. ''Fine. What do you wanna do, *cariño*?''

Finney's stomach swarms with butterflies, and he doesn't think he'll ever get over Robin speaking Spanish, especially when it's him calling Finney pretty names.

Finney swallows tightly. ''I don't know.''

Robin smiles, all soft lines and patient eyes. ''That's okay,'' He murmurs, leaning to press his forehead against Finney's. ''We'll figure it out together, yeah? Let me take care of you, Finn.''

Finney shivers, closing his eyes. ''Yeah,'' He whispers into the small space between their lips. ''Yeah, that sounds nice.''

God did Finney miss Robin, rather like how he imagines the stars miss the moon when its gone. This all feels like a dream, and he's waiting to wake up, waiting for Robin to laugh, waiting for someone to appear with a camera, and tell him none of it's real.

He knows he's getting ahead of himself. He knows he's taking it too fast. Literal hours ago, he was ready to curse Robin to hell, and never have anything to do with him again. And now, he wonders how he could've ever hated Robin.

Robin, with his sweet smile, and even sweeter eyes. Robin, with his gentle fingers, but sharp knuckles. Robin, with his desperate need to form a mark on the world, to have a reputation, a place. Robin, with his pride and proudness, with his fury and protectiveness, with his signature smirk, that Finney claims he despises, though secretly, he

kind of loves.

Robin, who once upon a time, fell in love, and punished himself for it.

Logically, of course, Finney has every right to be mad. He nurtured his loathing for three years, kept it close to his heart, ready to let everything spill at any given opportunity.

Finney's always forgiven easily, however. Always the type to say, 'It's okay', and 'Really, don't worry about it', quite simply.

Forgetting is a whole different matter, but Finney thinks for Robin, he can make an exception.

Thinks he'll never forgive *himself* if he doesn't at least try.

The two boys share a quiet moment, breathing in the same air, before the low groaning of Finney's dad interrupts them.

Robin throws a disgusted face over his shoulder. ''Oh, shut up, would you?''

Finney's dad doesn't answer, obviously, although he does groan again, this one slightly louder than the last.

''What now?'' Finney asks, not able to keep the anxiety from his voice.

Robin turns to glance at him, and freezes. He seems to look at Finney like he's seeing him for the first time.

''Your throat, Finn,'' Robin says, horrified. ''How didn't I notice before?''

It's clearly a rhetorical question, but Finney replies anyway, shrugging.

''It's not that big of a deal.''

Robin glares threateningly. ''Don't play it down like some little scratch – you can't fool me, Finn.''

Finney doesn't speak, allowing Robin to tilt his head to the side, so that he can examine the wound.

Sure, Finney can feel the hot cascade of blood running down his

throat, and sure, it stings horribly when he moves, but it's not *that* bad. He's alive, isn't he?

''You need to go to a hospital.'' Robin announces finally.

Finney scowls. ''No.''

''Finn,'' Robin says sternly. ''Don't argue with me – this is a serious injury.''

''I'm tired,'' Finney complains, pouting. ''Do we *have* to go now?''

Robin doesn't budge, dragging Finney to his feet, and grabbing a cloth from the counter.

''Yes,'' he says, pushing the material to the cut, and forcing Finney to lift his palm and hold it there. ''We do.''

Finney points to his dad with his free hand. ''What about him?''

Robin blinks, and then his face lights up with an idea.

''God,'' he says. ''What am I thinking? I should call the police, not bring you to a hospital myself.''

Finney goes motionless, and lead fills his stomach.

''The police?'' Finney repeats, voice shaky.

Robin stares at him in confusion for a beat, before his eyes go sad, and he reaches forward, brushing the pad of his thumb along Finney's right cheekbone.

''*Mi amor*,'' he sighs, and Finney melts a little. ''You can't live with him, anymore.''

Finney's not dumb – he understands that his dad is abusive, and unkind, and cruel. He hates his dad, truly hates him. And he'll never forgive his dad for what he's done to Finney and Gwen.

But, somewhere deep, deep down, locked away tightly in Finney's heart, is a small piece of love for Terrence. He mourns the loss of his father, and he grieves for when his mom was alive, and his dad was happy.

It's peculiar, the idea of someone taking his dad away. Finney doesn't really know how to feel.

''You're allowed to be upset.'' Robin tells him, his thumb moving up, to smooth out the creases in Finney's forehead.

''I am?'' Finney asks, vulnerable, and so, so scared.

''As awful as he is,'' Robin says, frowning. ''He's still your *dad*.''

Finney doesn't know why, but those words are the ones to break the dam. One second, he's fine, and the next he's bursting into tears, collapsing against Robin's expectant arms.

Robin squeezes him, running his fingers up and down Finney's spine. The gesture is comforting, and Finney can't help but sob louder, completely, and utterly safe within Robin's embrace.

''I've got you,'' Robin murmurs, pressing his lips to the top of Finney's curls. ''I've got you. You're okay, Finn.''

Finney weeps, his entire body trembling. His knees give out beneath him, and the two boys fall to the floor once again.

His limbs are sprawled awkwardly, and he feels as Robin tucks them in, drawing Finney nearer.

''It's not fair,'' Finney chokes out, the words raspy. ''Why am I so upset? Why can't I just be *normal*?''

Robin snorts. ''You'll always be far from normal, Finn.''

Finney whines in question, and Robin chuckles.

''When we were little,'' he says, rocking them side to side lightly. ''Do you know what my *mamá* used to call you?''

Finney shakes his head, and Robin smiles.

''*Niño estrella,''* And at his puzzled look, Robin leans down, mouth to Finney's ear. ''Star child, Finn. It means star child.''

Despite his already red cheeks from the crying, a new flush arises, and Finney ducks his head into Robin's chest.

''You,'' Robin says vehemently. ''Are a *niño estrella*, and there's nothing wrong with how you feel.''

''Okay.'' Finney mumbles, the word muffled by Robin's band tee.

They fall quiet, and Finney breathes, listening to the sound of Robin's heartbeat. He finds himself wishing Robin will never let him go – tranquillity soaring through him like some kind of drug.

''Robin?''

''Hm?''

''I've had enough time.''

Finney feels as Robin stiffens, his arms tightening.

''Finn,'' he says, unsure. ''I don't want you to forgive me because you're guilty. In fact, I don't want you to think you have to forgive me, at all.''

''Don't be silly, Robin. I don't think I *have* to forgive you.'' Finney replies, and he's certain, definite of this decision.

''*Finn*,'' Robin stresses, and he catches Finney's chin under the hook of his index finger, bringing their eyes together. ''I'm serious. I won't be angry if you never want to talk to me again.''

''But will you be unhappy? If I never spoke to you?''

''What I feel won't matter,'' Robin says, sincere. ''It's about you.''

Finney giggles. ''You're sweet,'' he says. ''And you're right – it is about me. So, I forgive you.''

Robin's expression does a funny thing where it scrunches up, and then smooths, and then scrunches a second time.

''I'm sorry,'' Robin apologises in the end. ''I'm still so, so sorry.''

''And I forgive you.'' Finney says simply, grinning.

Robin huffs in faux annoyance, but eventually his mouth quirks upward.

They look at each other, and Finney laughs, while Robin rolls his eyes, before joining in, eyes shining.

Finney's heart is about to burst with joy, and he can't help but stare at Robin's lips, suddenly noticing just how close their faces really are.

It seems Robin realises, too, and his laughter trails off, as he

watches Finney carefully.

Neither one of them breathe, caught in the moment. Finney recognises that Robin won't do anything without clear permission, though, and so he nudges forward first.

''I really want to kiss you. Is that okay?'' Finney asks quietly, inches away from making the connection.

Robin cups his jaw with one hand, while the other snakes around Finney's waist.

''Anything for you, Finn.'' Robin whispers, and it sounds like a promise.

Finney presses up, and sighs when their lips finally meet. It's slow, and soft, and it's everything Finney's dreamed of.

Finney's never kissed anyone before, but he thinks this will be the best one he ever has. He doesn't manage to stop himself from smiling into the kiss, and when Robin answers with one of his own, Finney beams properly.

It's typical, of course, that Finney's dad chooses that second to let out an obnoxious groan, and the two boys leap apart.

They both look to his dad, and then look back at each other, erupting into a fit of shy giggles.

Finney gazes at Robin, and despite the background worry, he doesn't think he's ever felt happier.

*****

''You're all free to go.'' Miss Case says, and Finney jumps up, stuffing his things into his backpack.

He's hungry, and the lunch bell took *forever* to ring. He needs food, this instant.

Finney ducks out of the classroom and begins the journey to the library.

He walks as fast as possible, reaching the library doors in no time at all. Pushing them open, he nods a greeting to the school librarian, and immediately beelines to the back, to the secret space hidden behind the shelves.

Finney rounds the final bend, and grins.

''*Mi amor*,'' Robin says, standing up from the beanbag in the corner. ''There you are.''

''Hi,'' Finney replies breathlessly, falling into Robin's waiting embrace. ''Sorry, Miss Case let us off late.''

''I was starting to think you ditched us.'' Vance calls from his chair, and Finney makes a face at him from over Robin's shoulder.

''Finn would never; he loves us too much.'' Bruce declares from his position next to Vance.

Finney scoffs, rolling his eyes in exasperation when he notices their intertwined hands. Honestly, it's like they think Robin and him are blind – they're not subtle.

He doesn't say anything though, as secretly, he thinks they're rather cute.

''I'm starving.'' Finney announces, pulling away from Robin, and collapsing into the nearest seat.

''Are you free after school? We were thinking about a movie night.'' Robin says, and Finney frowns, apologetic.

''I can't, I've got another dumb meeting thing.''

''What's this?'' Bruce asks, raising his eyebrows.

Finney waves a hand dismissively. ''You know, the people trying to figure out what exactly to do with Gwen and I.''

Robin scowls in irritation. ''I still don't get why you guys can't just live with me – my *mamá* adores you two.''

Finney laughs, shaking his head. ''I don't think that's allowed.''

Robin glowers, and Finney reaches out, squeezing their palms together.

''It'll work out, don't worry.''

''I hope so.'' Robin mutters, bringing Finney's fingers up to his mouth, pressing his lips to the skin gently.

''Get a fucking room, would you?'' Vance groans, and Finney glares at him.

''Look who's talking.'' He counters, glancing pointedly at Vance and Bruce's hands.

Vance straightens, familiar rage adorning his face.

''Excuse me?''

''You're excused.'' Finney says, and he knows he's messed up.

Vance launches over the table, crashing into him with the force of a hurricane. Finney yelps, tumbling to the floor.

''Vance, you idiot! We're in a library.'' Bruce hisses from somewhere above them, but neither Finney nor Vance seem to care.

They wrestle messily – Finney kicking and scratching with all his might. Eventually, Vance manages to pin him, and Finney struggles, but to no avail.

''I win.'' Vance says proudly.

''Not fair! You jumped me.'' Finney complains, huffing.

Vance just smirks, and Finney looks to Robin, who's watching them in amusement.

''He cheated!'' Finney whines, and Robin grins cheekily.

''Want me to avenge you?'' He inquires, and at Finney's nod, pushes forward, knocking Vance to the ground.

Finney gets up, dusting himself off, as the two boys grapple on the floor. Bruce gives him a *look*.

''It's what Vance deserves, not my fault he cheated.'' Finney says, all innocent, and Bruce just sighs.

''You're unbelievable sometimes, you know that?''

Finney shrugs, watching as Robin twists Vance's arm, and as Vance retaliates by kicking Robin's shin.

He sits down with Bruce, and as they start up a conversation about their previous classes, he smiles to himself, relaxing.

His dad no longer has custody of Gwen and him, he's made some genuine friends, and his boyfriend is Robin Arellano – the boy he's been in love with since he first set eyes on him.

Yeah, Finney thinks he can get used to this.

Chapter End Notes

Ahhhhh it's over!! God, how weird is that? I'm gonna really miss this story - it's legit all I've thought about the past month haha.

I know I didn't add a lot of Vance and Bruce's friendship with Finney developing in, sorry about that. I was thinking about it, but ultimately, I decided I wanted to keep this extremely centred on Robin and Finney, I hope that's okay!! I couldn't help but write the little playful scene at the end with all the boys though, which I thought was quite cute lol.

Also, I know, I know, the kiss was super short, I was kinda upset too. But realistic relationships and pacing or whatever, I had to keep it plain and sweet. It would've been a bit strange to have them, like, make out in that situation, especially since Finn's only just forgiven Robin.

Of course, I wanna quickly say how grateful I am to you guys!! Like, seriously, I didn't expect it at all, this fic was just a silly little idea, and I'm so shocked by how much everyone loved it!! You're all so freaking sweet, thank you so much <33

So, how are we feeling? What are everyone's thoughts? I'd love to hear them <33

End Notes

Thanks so much for reading!!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!